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REFERENCE WORK

WYER

LIBRARY CURRICULUM STUDIES

Prepared under the direction of
W. W. CHARTERS

# REFERENCE WORK

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Library Sch

*A Textbook for Students of Library Work and Librarians*

BY

JAMES I. WYER

*Chicago*
American Library Association
1930

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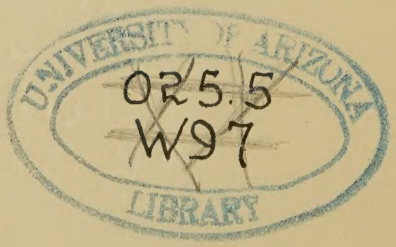


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TO

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## DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

In preparing textbooks for this series the following methods are utilized:

The Advisory Committee of the Curriculum Study, selected by the Board of Education for Librarianship of the American Library Association to represent all the types of institutions concerned with the preparation of the textbooks, determines matters of policy.

The Editorial Committee of the American Library Association, with the advice of the Advisory Committee, selects a small group of outstanding persons in the field to be treated by the textbook, from which group the author is selected by the Director of the Curriculum Study.

A subcommittee of advisers composed of experts in the field gives advice and assistance to the author.

The author and the staff make a detailed analysis of the duties and traits of workers in this field in order that a clear picture may be had of the problems and activities that are to be discussed in the text.

All the literature bearing upon the methods of performance of duties, principles underlying the methods, points of view, and objectives of the field, is canvassed.

Visits are made to at least fifty libraries having a substantial reputation in the field in order to secure best methods which have not been recorded in print.

The author comes to the Study headquarters in Chicago and devotes an uninterrupted period of several months to preparing the first draft of the textbook with the assistance of the staff.

The textbook as prepared in tentative form is mimeographed and used in library school classes for the purpose of receiving criticisms and suggestions which will be of use in the later revision of the text.

It is also submitted to twenty-five or more persons who qualify as experts in the field and are not connected with library schools.

The author in the light of these criticisms and suggestions revises the text for final publication. The text is then printed for general distribution by the American Library Association.

At least two hundred people engaged in library work contribute to the preparation of each text. Thus the series is to a quite unusual degree a cooperative enterprise of the library profession.

W. W. C.

Chicago
August, 1929

## FOREWORD

The chief aim of this book is to acquaint prospective librarians, particularly students in library schools, most of whom now are college graduates, with the materials, methods, organization and conduct of that part of modern library service which is known as Reference Work. It is hoped that the book also may be useful or suggestive to instructors and students in the minor agencies for library training, particularly summer schools, apprentice classes, library institutes, and correspondence schools. While it is not planned as a cyclopedia of reference work, it should nevertheless not be without interest and value to librarians in all types and sizes of libraries.

The *materials* of reference work are noted above as part of the book's plan. In Miss Mudge's *Guide to reference books* there exists an admirable, seasoned, and sufficient list of the principal titles which fall into the conventional category of standard reference books. The present book complements but neither duplicates nor displaces the "Guide." There are few book titles named, none described minutely. This is done in the "Guide." The reference materials here discussed in Part I are those broad yet distinct classes or groups of printed matter which in character and content are of most value to the scholarly service which libraries seek to render. For the knowledge and study of these classes and books which typify them, methods are suggested and described, and there are especially emphasized their sources, character, and varying values in different subjects.

The second part of the book indicates the ways in which print is organized in libraries, and the *methods* and manner of its effective use for information, study, and research in different types of libraries. It reveals certain correspondences between library method and the general method of all scientific research.

The third part deals with the *administration* of a typical reference department, specialization of departments, special

libraries and collections, the traits and qualifications which mark the successful reference librarian, the necessary relations of the reference department to others, and the training of the public to use libraries for study and research.

It is believed that the chapter grouping is a logical one from the library point of view. Should the arrangement not seem so well adapted for teaching purposes, it is of course quite possible to take up the chapters in any order wished.

A conscious and careful effort is made not only to give the author's experience and opinions but also to compile and report what seem to be the most suggestive and standard current American practices in this important department of the library.

Sincere and grateful acknowledgments are due to many who have helped with this book. To Dr. W. W. Charters and his admirable Library Curriculum Study, to its professional staff, and particularly to Harold F. Brigham and Anita M. Hostetter, two exceptionally competent and clear-headed young librarians, the author is deeply indebted.

Without Dr. Charters' stimulating personality and his unique professional organization, its methods and facilities, its preliminary work in charting the field and collecting material, its director's cordial and sufficing cooperation with librarians, it seems certain that not one of the textbooks in this series would have been written—assuredly not the present one.

Of high value have been the criticisms of thirty-five librarians who read the book in its preliminary edition, the ready advice and suggestions of carefully chosen advisory committees (all these a part of the Curriculum Study program), and the cooperation of members of the American Library Association Headquarters staff.

The author wishes to record special appreciation for the careful work of Emily V. D. Miller, editor of American Library Association publications, and to Frances L. Cregan for such constant and varied assistance as only a vigilant and capable secretary can render.

J. I. Wyer

New York State Library
April 10, 1929

# PART I

## Materials. *The World of Print*

# Chapter 1

## REFERENCE WORK—THEORY AND OBJECTIVES

1. Historical summary
2. Definitions
3. Mechanism versus humanism
4. Theory of reference work

**1. Historical summary.** It is significant of the spirit of the modern library movement that its outstanding feature of personal service, and especially of educated and trained personal service, has seen almost its inception, certainly its general acceptance and emphasis, within the memory of those yet living.

In 1871, there being then no American Library Association, the American Social Science Association published in Boston a sixty-page brochure, *Free public libraries: suggestions on their foundation and administration.* That eminent historical scholar and vigorous librarian, Justin Winsor, was chiefly responsible for the matter in this pamphlet, perhaps the first formal American treatise on the subject. Over half its pages are filled with a list of books. The word "reference" occurs but once, at the head of a short list of dictionaries and cyclopedias. There is nowhere any hint that personal aid to those who might come to use these books was any part of library work sixty years ago.

In 1876 the federal government published a classic and exhaustive report on the libraries of the United States. In neither this nor the book noted above does the term "reference work" occur. In neither is assistance to readers or students more than casually mentioned. Indeed in the 1876 report it is mentioned only to fortify an argument for making (under suitable restrictions) as many books as possible easily available in reading rooms so that "the time of the librarian and assistants may be economized for other labor." Evidently the theory of what passed for reference work a half-century ago was: Provide the books and keep out of the way of readers as much as possible.

By 1893 a similar government-printed cross-section of American library practice contained a chapter on "Assistance to readers." Five topics are discussed: book selection, classification, cataloging, the planning of the building, and, last of all, "personal assistance." But the latter is thus cautiously handled as fraught with dubious possibilities, a sort of boomerang: "There is plainly a growing tendency among libraries to adopt this fundamentally effective feature of assistance to readers, but there are certain aspects of the matter which should be clearly recognized, else disappointment may result."[1] The thoughtful article later shows clearly that the matter had been carefully considered in at least a few libraries, and indicates principles and practices which underlie the best reference work of today.

By 1897 the *General index to the Library Journal volume 1-22* shows but seven articles on reference work (there are 206 on cataloging) all printed after 1891. The headings "reference room," "reference librarian," "reference department" do not appear in the *Library Journal* index, although all are used in *Library Work 1905-1911.*

**2. Definitions.** The conception of reference work by the profession of today is fairly shown in the following definitions:

"That part of a library's activity which has to do with the use of books within the building as distinguished from *home* use."—E. C. Richardson.

"Help given by a librarian to one engaged in research or study of any description."—Mary E. Hazeltine.

"The service rendered by a librarian *in aid* of some sort of study."—W. W. Bishop.

"That part of library administration which deals with the assistance given to readers in their use of the resources of the library."—Alice B. Kroeger.

"That phase of library work which is directly concerned with supplying information and aid to readers engaged in some form of study or research."—Anita M. Hostetter.

"Sympathetic and informed personal aid in interpreting library collections for study and research."—J. I. Wyer.

These definitions show how fast and far the library idea of reference work has gone since 1871.

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[1] Foster, W. E. Assistance to readers. In World's Library Congress papers, 1896. p. 982–93. Reprinted from U. S. Bureau of Education. Report, 1892–93. v. 1. p. 691–1014.

**3. Mechanism versus humanism.** Reference work exists because it is not possible to organize books so mechanically, so perfectly, as to dispense with personal service in their use. Here is a service which defies and transcends machinery. It still is, and always will be, imperative to provide human beings as intermediaries between the reader and the right book. The utmost use of great libraries never can be attained by mechanics. It includes and requires what may best be called *interpretation,* a far more delicate and difficult matter than can ever be achieved by mechanical marvels.

Grant that the rare man who knows precisely what he wants may yet be served automatically, there will remain about ninety-five per cent of the present library visitors, and with them the myriad requirements, irritations, privileges, opportunities, and compensations of personal service. Both the seekers and the sought represent too many psychological, spiritual, variable, and indeterminate factors and reactions ever to be solved or satisfied by machinery.

To *interpret* seems a much more exact and satisfying verb than to *aid,* to *help,* or to *assist,* in describing reference work. It connotes not merely less of mechanism and more of humanism: it suggests thoroughness (even in helping) as against superficiality; sympathetic as against perfunctory service; a colleague rather than a clerk; informed leadership rather than a steering committee; in a word, understanding. The distinction need not be pushed beyond the verb into staff titles. Reference librarians and assistants are doubtless preferable to "interpreters," yet the distinction, the difference, is there, suggestive and perhaps important. Neither should the literal meaning of this verb be allowed to set narrow metes and bounds to library service. Most library users will be best served by "unfolding" or "explaining" the catalog, the different groups of books, the various agencies in aid of study, but others (not unintelligent) want, and may reasonably expect, direct and speedy information from one who should know. A busy man who asks only for the latest and most complete work on a subject does not usually want to be handed or referred to a fully annotated bibliography.

Intelligent interpretation may require a confession that the library's own resources furnish nothing, and an offer to carry the inquiry to other libraries, persons, or institutions.

**4. Theory of reference work.** In attempting to isolate the theory of reference work, three distinct conceptions of it are found. They may be termed (a) Conservative, (b) Moderate (most nearly representing current practice), (c) Liberal or ideal.

(a) *Conservative.* It will be noted that the definitions of reference work given above stress as its core the words "help" and "aid" to study and research. W. W. Bishop in his "Theory of reference work"[1] bears down hard on this very point, thus: "Reference work is not the study itself—that is done by the reader; it is in aid of research, but it is not research itself; it is primarily help given to a reader, not performance of the reader's task." No library seriously undertakes to *do* all the reading, study, research, compilation, abstracting, examination, digesting, or copying that is entailed in its patrons' demands and desires. No library but is constantly saying just this to its constituency. To admit in theory the obligation to do more than *aid* or *assist* is to grant that the library will write books, make searches, compile genealogies, solve puzzles, summarize articles, and perform similar services, to any extent, for every applicant. This question of the kind and amount of service (especially of time) which properly may be given to patrons is one which goes to the root of the correct theory on which reference work is done. J. C. Dana[2] holds that far too much time is used searching for answers to trivial questions. The librarian often should say that no more time can be spent without injustice to other work, that the answer may exist in designated material but the reader must look for it himself, or that the question is unanswerable here, suggesting another library or source. Those who hold with Dana and Bishop believe that the prime duty of a library is not to find answers but to organize its

[1] Bishop, W. W. Backs of books. Williams and Wilkins, 1926. p. 149–64. Also in A.L.A. Bulletin 9:134–39. July, 1915.

[2] Dana, J. C. Misdirection of effort in reference work. Public Libraries 16:108. March, 1911.

material effectively and teach patrons to help themselves. The librarians should keep the books on the shelves when not in use, prepare accurate catalogs and files, segregate special collections as needed, keep accurate loan records, and in addition be on hand to direct, suggest, explain, help a little, answer questions as to the use of the library machinery, know as many as possible of the books the library owns and a good deal about some of them, but be scrupulous always to stop short of finding anything or even looking for anything in any book.

All this points to a perfectly sound theory, one which can readily be defended from a number of angles, such as economy, pedagogy, administrative propriety, the ethics of self-help, the proper use of public funds and property; and it seems fairly to summarize the views of the close-constructionists. It is likely that none of them but is more liberal in the administration of reference work in his own library than his private opinions suggest.

(b) *Moderate.* And yet a vast amount of reference work is done, to which almost every library contributes, which honors this conservative theory more in the breach than the observance. Answers *are* found, search *is* made, research *is* done, citations *are* verified, compared, even copied, translations *are* made, papers actually *are* written, not by the seekers themselves but by the librarians. Doubtless much time is thus spent which might better be used to stimulate and instruct readers to serve themselves.

Perhaps reference instruction in the library schools is in some measure responsible for this tendency to stretch *Conservative* towards *Moderate.* The large classroom and practice use of the reference question as a means of instruction (and a very admirable means it is) must tend to make the personal solution of actual questions seem a habit or a duty.

Again, the growth of the special library, a private, rarely a public, collection, and the demands made upon its staff which are incomparably more justified, exacting, and far-reaching than in any other type of library, are all in the direction of lodging and concentrating on the library the actual

search for and production of the desired information. Most special libraries are created to be bureaus of information, not merely collections of organized material. The increasing number of specialized reference departments in public libraries shows a tendency in the same direction.

Perhaps this tendency to overdo is a manifestation of the zeal, knowledge, helpfulness, and conscience which go to make that "library" spirit of service which is the saving grace of any calling, and which at its best may not be curbed, resisted, or reproved. It is hard to find fault with such service.

But what of a theory that in any way cramps or hinders the utmost helpfulness to every visitor? There will of course be a few restrictions. Obviously a library must decline to furnish photostat service free or to do regular or wholesale abstracting, translating, compiling, typing, copying, although it may properly enough provide facilities for such work by its own staff, in outside time, or by others, at cost or current rates. A sensible criterion with many libraries is that no free work may be done for patrons which does not clearly promise future usefulness to the library or add a desirable item to its equipment. But having said this, why not stop? The tendency, the expectation of patrons, the practice of many libraries, clearly are towards the library's functioning as a bureau of information which shall not alone guide, direct, help, aid, or assist, but which may legitimately be called upon by mail, by telephone, by messenger, by telegraph, actually to produce the desired results. And as libraries grow, as their organization is perfected, above all as their personnel reflects more and better education, professional training, and competence, will not this combination of resources and abilities be more generally recognized as an agency that usually can do such work in a fraction of the time required by a layman, and which therefore should be charged with its performance? This prospect and program will naturally relate chiefly to that part (and a considerable one it is) of reference work which may be called fact-finding or search, as distinct from research. In genuine research it is obvious that the library's part is done when the utmost facilities have been provided

and when educated and trained librarians are at hand to produce books, to help, explain, and suggest, and sometimes merely to listen.

With all this must go the utmost efforts at training in *self-help*. No theory of reference work is complete which fails to recognize the library's obligation to train its public in the use of its collections. This is at bottom only altruistic selfishness, because a trained public that helps itself will make for easier and more satisfying library service, and will enable more people to be served. In this matter little more than the beginnings have been made by American libraries, and especially by the free public libraries, as will be described in detail in Chapter 18, Training the public. High schools, colleges, and libraries, or departments of libraries with definite and rather restricted constituencies can naturally arrange for formal instruction more easily than the public libraries.

It seems unbelievable, however, that the time can ever come when the general public will be so well instructed, so easy and effective in its use of its own libraries, that it will relieve the reference staff altogether, or even in large measure, from the actual work of fact-finding and of search.

(c) *Liberal.* The liberal, progressive, and enlightened theory of reference work will assume that every library desires to give the fullest possible attention to demands made on its reference service; that it will wish to find or to create ways and means to satisfy every questioner. This will be especially true of that part of its work which has to do with the more serious study of its book collections. The only tenable, impregnable theory of reference work is that which frankly recognizes the library's obligation to give this unlimited service, and such a theory squares with practice in commercial and other fields. It is service, not suggestion, that is at a premium. The Gloversville milkman who, with one eye on his horses and wagon at the curb, shouted through the public library door for "a book to cure my best cow" would never have left $70,000 to that library if he had been told to "Consult the card catalog under cows," only to flounder among references to Cattle, Diseases of, Bovine

therapeutics, etc. It is timid and inexcusable, as well as poor practical policy, for the library, created for precisely such service as is indicated above, better equipped and presumably more competent to render it than any other agency, to withhold its utmost service. The library wisely administered with a view to its continued support and well-founded public esteem, will instruct the reference librarian to be liberal in interpretation. To refuse the time of a not highly paid information assistant to give an address from a directory, thereby saving the time of a business man's trip across the city, is to invite reproach and lack of financial assistance.

Duncan, *Commercial research,*[1] says, "Part of the work of the librarian (of a research bureau of any business) should be compiling a history of the business for the use of the manager."

In Reid, *Introduction to organic research,*[2] the following observations occur: "The research chemist can reduce his work in the laboratory by increasing his work in the library," and again, in a most appreciative chapter on libraries, "Few even of those who use libraries realize how much the librarian does to aid his customers and how willing he is to do it."

These excerpts show fairly what business men expect from libraries, and think is meant by reference work.

Dr. William S. Learned (another layman) says:

"Strong tendencies now apparent in many progressive cities indicate the ultimate development in most communities of an institution where a great range of useful information available in print may be secured authoritatively and quickly. It will be a center as familiar to every inhabitant as the local postoffice, and as inevitably patronized. It will constitute the central intelligence service of the town not only for 'polite' literature but for every commercial and vocational field of information that it may prove practicable to enter. . . .

"Obviously such an institution in a small town will not possess an extensive collection of books and materials, but it will be in close working connection with towns and cities where such collections are, and where answers to questions, photostat copies of reference matter, and books on loan can be speedily secured at a trifling fee. With such connections the resources of a great part of the country may be made available for a relatively small circle. . . .

"The conspicuous and indispensable feature of such an institution as has been proposed is a well-specialized personal service, precisely

[1] Duncan, C. S. Commercial research. Macmillan, 1919. p. 322.
[2] Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924. p. 61, 112.

as this is the *sine qua non* of a successful college. The purpose of an intelligence service is first to overcome the reluctance people have to seeking information, and later to maintain their interest and support by supplying just the information required in the form in which it can best be utilized by the person in question, and in a manner that invites repetition. This is a task for an expert possessing personal tact, quick intellectual sympathies and appreciation, a thorough knowledge of a certain field of material, precision and discrimination of thought, and the power promptly to organize results.

"These are not excessive requirements and can be met provided the respective fields of knowledge are made sufficiently narrow. Many reference agencies that now exist defeat their purpose by placing in charge a staff assigned to the entire universe. Only the vaguest and most casual service can be expected of such 'experts.' Applicants for information are handled on the principle of turn and turn about, a procedure that is comparable to rotating courses alphabetically among the instructors on a college faculty. . . . The present result of such failure is that serious enquirers simply do not apply for such trifling service as is to be had. . . .

"It is important that the service go further than placing a pile of strange books or other printed material on the table before the applicant. The acquisition of knowledge is forbidding for many chiefly because it is housed in books, and the extraction thereof is itself an art. In certain fields, and to some extent in all fields, this inhibition operates on all students. For trained workers with books the technique of limited departments of knowledge soon becomes automatic and rapid, and should be at the enquirer's disposal. Very many applications can be answered directly, by telephone or in writing, in terms of ideas instead of books, with perhaps a reference to a single book where the idea is best stated. The net result of all such service should be to simplify and invite instead of to bewilder and repel; each patron should come to realize that all the resources of the institution will be fully utilized in giving him promptly what he needs, if that can be discovered."[1]

It is clear that Dr. Learned has far more in mind than the conceptions of reference work stated above in (a) Conservative, and (b) Moderate.

The failure, to which he alludes, of libraries to function with thorough success as bureaus of information has been noted and taken advantage of in commercial circles. The many quick information "services" now conducted for profit offer eloquent testimony to opportunities which libraries have not been able or alert enough to improve. Indeed, the remarkable increase in the number of special libraries must be due in some measure to the failure of general libraries to render the same kinds of service. Not only has the library measur-

[1] Learned, W. S. American public library and the diffusion of knowledge. Harcourt, 1924. p. 12–14.

ably failed to take full or even fair advantage of its opportunities for reference service but, when compared with similar research agencies in science, technology, and business whose handmaid the library is, it has been timid in asking for resources to extend and intensify its work.

The liberal program goes far beyond the use merely of the resources of the single library. The conception of reference work which is limited to the resources of one library or one city or even to books and print alone is out of date. There must more and more be utilized the impressive machinery described in Chapter 5, the effect of which will be to make available, in varying degrees, but to every library, the resources of all others.

And to these resources, presumably richer and better organized each year, must be added an administrative vision and energy which shall procure means and facilities adequate for their utmost utilization and which shall provide a personnel versatile and competent enough to meet scholars on their own ground, and of such zeal and spirit as shall deem it a personal reproach to send the humblest inquirer away unserved and unsatisfied.

This liberal argument palpably is somewhat a counsel of perfection. There probably is nothing in it to which all progressive librarians will not fervently add "Speed the day," but consummation with all its implications inevitably is for the future.

In the meantime these same librarians—all librarians, it is hoped—will agree upon *Moderate* as a basic statement, fairly representing the best current practice, of an "irreducible minimum" for a theory of reference work. With this program before us, every effort should be made to square library practice with the *Liberal* statement as quickly and as far as possible. It is unbelievable that appropriations and public approval will not accompany all thoroughgoing and really successful examples of such service. Indeed it seems likely that a study of the matter will show that endowments, appropriations of public monies and public appreciation are now noticeably going to the libraries that exemplify liberal ideas

of service in this inviting and useful field. In all theories, policies, and practices which aim at making libraries the recognized and most effective community clearing houses for information, the dreams of today will be the realities of tomorrow.

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Learned, W. S. The American public library and the diffusion of knowledge. Harcourt, 1924.
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## Thought Questions

1. Rate the objectives of library reference work in order of importance.
2. Which is more important, to help readers or to help them help themselves? Which is easier?
3. How can you justify reference work to tax payers?
4. Formulate your own definition of reference work.
5. What policy would you adopt in regard to prolonged search on reference questions in:
   (a) A small public library with no organized department
   (b) A large public library having several special reference departments.
6. On pages 9, 10 and 11 a number of services sometimes performed by reference librarians are mentioned. List them, and opposite each indicate whether you consider it a legitimate part of reference service in a public library of medium size. Suggest to what extent the library might reasonably go in rendering the service.
7. State fully what is meant by the term "interpreting" the collections of a library.
8. Suggest things not now generally done which are reasonably possible for libraries in extending and perfecting reference service.

# Chapter 2

## REFERENCE BOOKS—TYPES AND STUDY

1. Dictionaries
2. Encyclopedias
3. Atlases, maps, gazetteers
4. Bibliographies
5. Yearbooks
6. Directories
7. Indexes
8. Catalogs

For a long time the terms "reference books" and "reference work" carried far narrower meanings than today. The term "reference books" early attached itself in popular use to three or four of the groups noted just below which still come first to mind when the caption is used. And "reference work" was no more than the effort to answer questions asked at the information desk, by consulting these particular books. Today the conception of both terms has greatly broadened. This fact is well shown by comparing the slender hundred-page first edition of the *Guide to the study and use of reference books,* 1902, with the present fifth edition of over three hundred pages.[1] Reading and reference room collections of "R" books[2] a generation ago numbered hundreds, today thousands. This is not because there are so many more dictionaries, cyclopedias, and atlases now than then; rather that whole new groups of books have come to be considered and used as quick reference material, to be kept within easy reach. And today it would be hard to find a reference librarian worth his salt who does not feel and insist that any book in any part of the library (even the pay-duplicate collection!) is fair game in his hour of need. He may have counter claims from other departments, he may even be driven to diplomatic "conversations" to enforce his point of view, but that he should recede is unthinkable, unless to insist that duplicate copies be bought of books first acquired by another department but needed constantly in the reference department.

[1] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A. L. A., 1929.

[2] An "R" book is one removed from its proper place in the stack and placed temporarily in the reference room or in some other special collection. While thus located it carries an "R" (or the initial of some other special collection) before the call number on its book-plate and label.

Having thus lodged a sufficient disclaimer against any narrow conception of reference materials, it may be said that the following eight classes of reference books have been chosen for review because they are the large groups most representative of what may still be called conventional reference books and to which may be referred with assurance a large part of the daily grist of questions that come to most libraries. They are (1) Dictionaries, (2) Encyclopedias, (3) Atlases, maps, gazetteers, (4) Bibliographies, (5) Yearbooks, almanacs, statistical annuals, (6) Directories, (7) Indexes, (8) Catalogs. These types are considered as to character, features, study points, differentiated reference values. They are discussed as so many distinct forms in which essentially reference materials are presented. No specific titles are described or compared. No book lists are given.

The range and variety offered by this list is noticeable. Encyclopedias present solid matter at some length, on every subject. The dictionary reduces print to its lowest intelligible terms and deals with letters and words. Atlases and maps present information graphically rather than through exposition. The unique value of the best yearbooks and annuals is their admirable tabloid record of current progress and events. Bibliographies are an interesting and relatively new type of book, sometimes supplying information but oftener serving merely as intermediary or pathfinder. Directories in small libraries illustrate perhaps better than any other group the pure "tool" in book form which is no true book—indispensable for a day, nearly useless tomorrow, little more than dry, juiceless husks, devoid of nourishment, inspiration, or permanent worth yet having in large history collections other distinctive values. Indexes unlock the gate to the most fruitful single field of current reference materials. Catalogs disclose the resources of other libraries, identify and describe books not locally available and supplement usefully other bibliographic apparatus.

**1. Dictionaries.** Formerly more than now the term "dictionary" was applied to any compilation arranged alphabetically, e.g., Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel,*

although a precisely similar work a generation later is entitled *La grande encyclopédie.* The word is still used to describe an alphabetically arranged book in one field, e.g., Palgrave, *Dictionary of political economy,* although in this chapter and in library parlance generally such works classify as special cyclopedias and the term dictionary is restricted to language dictionaries, which meaning indeed the word itself intimates.

## Points on Which to Judge a Dictionary

It has sometimes seemed to the author that it has been too easy to sell poor reference books to libraries and that careful examination before purchase is exceptional. If true, this is a reproach not alone to our intelligence but to our careful expenditure of money entrusted to us. It is astonishing how many and what shortcomings can be brought to light by a rigid, practiced examination of many of the pretentious and costly reference works offered to libraries, and the fact that so many of them are sold and expected to be sold on the prospectus, on specimen pages, on dummy bindings, with no real examination whatever, is either a superb exhibition of salesmanship or a humiliating commentary on libraries as easy marks. One way to get better books is to insist on having them.

It is well to preserve the results of careful or exhaustive examinations of new reference books. Libraries should, and often do, conduct such critical work more thoroughly and from a somewhat different point of view than the formal reviewer. The results will be useful in instructing reference workers, in advising inquirers about reference book purchases, in comparing new with existing books in the same field, in making book notes and bibliographies, and perhaps in helping publishers, especially of subscription books, to a full understanding of what features librarians value or disapprove in dictionaries and cyclopedias.

Librarians must know intimately, in the utmost detail, the points which characterize good dictionaries, and, particularly for those of our own language, it is necessary to know which

of these points are found in each important title and whether they are well or poorly done. In examining and comparing dictionaries, particularly English dictionaries, the following outline shows the major and minor subjects and items which may and usually do appear. They are not all found in every dictionary, perhaps rarely are all in any *one,* but the points noted constitute a safe program beyond which no dictionary can well go without losing its proper character.

(a) Preliminary matter
- (1) Title-page title; alternative titles, e.g., Oxford-Murray, Webster-New International
- (2) Editors, publishers, date, copyright date
- (3) History and genealogy of the work or of any works which may have been merged with it
- (4) Statement of scope and limitations. Period or field covered
- (5) Contributors. Staff—their competence and reputations
- (6) Explanation of arrangement, symbols, marks, keys, abbreviations
- (7) History of language, of lexicography

(b) Body of book
- (1) Vocabulary, inclusions and exclusions. Number of words
- (2) Treatment of individual words
  - Spelling
  - Capitalization
  - Syllabication and hyphenation. Word division
  - Pronunciation. How indicated? Diacritical marks (keys, key-lines); other marks or devices, e.g., phonetic alphabet
  - Etymology. Root words. Derivations
  - History of words
  - Obsolete words. Colloquial words. Borrowed words. Idioms
  - Definitions. Fullness and arrangement. Encyclopedic information
  - Quotations. Many or few? Exact references to sources
  - Synonyms and antonyms
  - Cross-references (both in spelling and synonyms)
  - Plural nouns. Parts of verbs
- (3) Illustrations. Colored plates: attractive, accurate, appropriate?

(c) Appendices
- (1) Special types of words, e.g., Christian names, proper names (including geographic names), foreign phrases, obsolete words, abbreviations
- (2) Biography, gazetteer, noted names of fiction, proverbs, literary allusions

(3) Illustrations: useful, worth their space?

(d) Typography. Physical makeup
(1) Paper
(2) Types
(3) Format
(4) Binding
(5) Number of volumes
(6) Mechanical aids. Guide words at top of pages, thumb index

(e) Special features
(1) Double alphabet, as in the New International
(2) Simplified spelling
(3) Grouping and correlation, as in the Standard

The careful study and comparisons suggested by the above "points" must be made by students beginning library work, and the habit thus formed may well be strengthened through the years by making similar examination of all new or revised reference books claiming attention for purchase. Such books are expensive and most libraries, unable to buy even all the satisfactory ones, must perforce choose among them. And there are now enough good English dictionaries and encyclopedias on the market to afford scope for careful choice.

With respect to foreign dictionaries, especially those in little known languages, careful study and examination are of less importance. While there are degrees of merit and scholarship among them, yet for all but the commoner languages a dictionary is a dictionary, the latest not always the best, and any reference library may well increase its holdings of such books to any extent without looking them over too carefully. There will never be too many of them, for, like quotation books, each supplements every other.

Something of the scholastic moment and significance of a great dictionary, and therefore an earnest of its importance in the library, may be gathered from a glance at three current achievements in lexicography. The making of a modern dictionary is an undertaking requiring much time and money. No one man will ever repeat Samuel Johnson's feat. A single lifetime no longer suffices, no individual purse is equal to the task, without the aid of eminent scholastic auspices. A great university, a publishing house, an academy or learned society now sponsors such projects, which are frequently endowed

or subsidized by governments or foundations. A permanent administrative seat and organization must be provided, a professional staff must be chosen as carefully as a college faculty, and means must be assured for a generation or two. The *Oxford dictionary,* finished in 1928, was begun in 1859, and is estimated to have cost five million dollars. Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* and *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal,* both unfinished, date from 1851 and 1864 respectively. It is likely that a permanent staff will continue on each of these monumental projects, for no sooner is such a work nominally finished than the work of revision, addition and continuation must begin.

Librarians often wonder why a dictionary is not content to remain one, and not try to be also a cyclopedia of proper names, a handbook of quotations, a list of foreign phrases, a miscellaneous assortment of indifferent pictures, a list of noted names of fiction, a geographical gazetteer, a biographical dictionary, etc. Some of these features are remote from the main business of being a dictionary, others invade fields better covered by other standard books. If any of them properly falls within the province of the dictionary, they had better all be included in one single alphabet and not put into several appendices where they are likely to be overlooked. Perhaps these miscellaneous features reflect the publisher's praiseworthy effort to make the indispensable one-volume household library. This point of view, however, does not appeal to the librarian. He prefers each reference book to "stick to its last," and to contain no unrelated, unexpected, and incidental matter which increases the cost of the book and requires the library to pay a second time for matter better presented elsewhere and in books where it would more naturally be looked for. So long as these various supplements are published, it behooves reference librarians to know about them. In very small libraries it sometimes, unfortunately, may be necessary to let them serve instead of buying standard and more adequate books.

2. **Encyclopedias.** Encyclopedias should be examined and compared with even more care than dictionaries, and

should never be bought until such a study has been made. They cost more and probably are more used than any single type of reference book. There are greater and more significant differences between even first-rate encyclopedias than between satisfactory dictionaries. They are more used, and cover a far wider range of subjects. Their reference value, too, is more enduring. Cyclopedias get out of date, of course, but the pressure of new matter on current editions is so great that many articles of exceeding worth and ability are dropped from successive editions. Articles could be cited in the seventh and eighth editions of *Britannica* which are of genuine historical value, and written with a brilliance and authority never since matched. Thus to a degree not only does each encyclopedia supplement every other but each edition of a thoroughly good encyclopedia does the same. No encyclopedia is the best in all fields.

Good ways to test encyclopedias are:

To read the articles on subjects one knows most about, those on one's own state or city, for example, and check every fact and statement carefully.

To read articles in different encyclopedias on subjects about which one knows nothing, and see which gives the clearest idea. This tests not accuracy but clearness of presentation.

To compare two rivals; the articles on the same subjects may be examined by experts for content, treatment, etc., or those under one or two letters may be counted, or, more helpful and conclusive still, the biographical or scientific articles under the same letters may be compared as to number, length (in lines or words), appended bibliographies. A list of all the articles under B, for instance, in the latest editions of *Americana* and *New International* would be an interesting study, especially to note those in one cyclopedia which are not in the other.

### Study Points for Encyclopedias

(a) Literary features
  (1) Accuracy
  (2) Up-to-dateness, especially with statistics
  (3) Articles signed or unsigned; authority of contributors

(4) Style
  Scholarly
  Popular
  Lucid
  Vague
  Involved
  Loose
  Heavy
(5) Balance and proportion
  Scope (limitations, confessed or unconfessed)
  Length of articles
  Special emphases, strength or weakness in any field or subject
(6) Impartiality. Bias. Special pleading
(7) History, including present editors and publishers
(8) National viewpoint, i.e., American, British, or foreign

(b) Bibliographic features
(1) Arrangement
  Outlines preceding long articles
  Long articles (with index entries or cross-references to minor topics embedded in them)
  Separate and many articles on small subjects
(2) Alphabeting (letter by letter or word by word)
(3) Bibliographies (brief or full, up-to-date, annotated)
(4) Date of last revision (replated or doctored)
(5) Cross-references. Indexes (if required)
(6) Maps
(7) Illustrations, diagrams, plates, graphs
(8) Supplements, yearbooks, loose leaves, reading courses

(c) Typographic. Physical features
(1) Paper (thick or thin)
(2) Type (sizes, contrasting)
(3) Binding
(4) Press work (clear, clean, muddy)
(5) Make-up of page (number of columns, guides, running heads)
(6) Number of volumes

It is a singular fact that many persons are not wholly satisfied with being referred to an encyclopedia, even when it is exactly what will help them most or is known to contain precisely the information sought. Patrons seem a bit scornful of the obvious, a bit contemptuous of what is so familiar and so close at hand. This reaction, which at bottom would seem to be purely psychological, is difficult to analyze. It may be that the second- and third-rate encyclopedias oftenest found in many homes have brought this type of book into such disfavor that the first-rate ones in libraries are too lightly regarded. Often the unreasoning eagerness for the

"very latest" which marks the pursuit of the novel, seems to have invaded the reference room, finding expression in voice or manner somewhat thus: "That's only the encyclopedia! I want something really up to date. Isn't there a book on the subject?" All of which may call for additional tact and good nature from the librarian, but should not abate his full faith in the best encyclopedias.

**3. Atlases, maps, gazetteers.**[1] Dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas: the cornerstones of a reference collection. And of the trio the atlas is the most beguiling. There are occasional steady students of our dictionaries, even apart from the addicts of the word-building contest and the cross-word puzzle. The library patron is not unknown who reads through the encyclopedia volume by volume. But all mankind loves a map. There is about it a lure, a fascination which has been perennial, long antedating those war-time days which sent the world scurrying to the map of Central Europe, which kept all eyes as never before, and for four years, in home, school, library, office, and street, fixed on maps, and which finally threw all maps into the discard and revised all atlases and gazetteers.

The gazetteer, in truth, from its usual alphabetic form, belongs to the dictionary or encyclopedia type of book, but it is nearly always geographic and its use is associated so closely with maps that it is listed here.

The reference value of maps is not only in the obvious scholastic fields of history and geography; to public libraries will come requests for maps of highways, electric lines, post routes, topographic sheets. It would be thought that every motorist would have his own road map, but all libraries will testify to the fallacy of this assumption.

The increased instructional use of graphic representation has greatly stimulated the use and output of maps.

Using the words "map" and "atlas" interchangeably (for an atlas is but a volume of maps) there are many kinds which librarians distinguish: (a) geographic, (b) historical, (c)

[1] Practical articles, especially helpful to small libraries, on these books, were printed in the Wisconsin Library Bulletin for March, April, and May, 1922, and May, 1927.

commercial, e.g., radio maps, navigation charts, (d) geologic, (e) real estate, (f) military, (g) topographic, (h) physiogeographic, e.g., rainfall, wind belts, vegetation, (i) transportation, e.g., roads, railroads, steamship and cable routes, air, such as the *Grosser luft-verkehrs-atlas,* (j) economic, e.g., weather maps, postal-route maps. The kinds that are used vary in different types of libraries. All libraries, however, must have the best in group (a) and beyond this, in general libraries, groups (b) and (c) bid first for favor.

While actual maps and atlases are expensive, especially if collected singly, yet a large part of the cost of a real map collection is for the equipment plus the labor of handling them and putting them in shape for easy use. This is discussed briefly in Chapter 19, where an abundant literature on the care of maps is also cited.

Collections of single maps are very useful if thoroughly classified and indexed. They may be weeded out as properly as a pamphlet collection. Indeed this statement is an aphorism throughout all reference work. More and more, material of the highest current usefulness is coming to be treated as ephemeral; even selected "R" collections must be continually "weeded," the discards not all being thrown away but stored in stack or sent to some large library which acts as a sort of regional reservoir library.

### Study Points for Maps and Atlases

The following study points will be helpful in examining and judging these materials. They apply particularly to the ordinary geographic map.

(a) Date. For information about the latest facts, the world war put out of date nearly all atlases, and the census of 1920 finished the American remainder by leaving all population and other statistics obsolete. Old atlases, however, have always a historical reference value. The date of a map may be tested by checking up on recently constructed railroads, highways, new towns, irrigation projects, discoveries, political boundary changes and new names.

(b) Scale. Small scale maps without room easily to delineate and name principal places are practically valueless. Fair-sized maps exist for most civilized portions of the globe.

(c) Projection. An important but technical and difficult matter. It will be helpful to read an encyclopedia article on the topic.

(d) Indexes. A universal index in one alphabet is preferable to marginal indexes to single maps or separate indexes to single states or countries, although having both universal and marginal indexes is still better. The index should be tested to see that all names on the maps appear in the index, and vice versa.

(e) Insets. These enlargements of important cities or regions are extremely useful, especially if clearly printed and not overcrowded.

(f) Coloring. Such colors should be chosen as furnish a sufficient and not too distressing contrast for adjacent states and countries and, above all, which shall not conceal the printed names.

(g) Typography. Clear but not too small type should be used. German and British atlases get many more names on an equal area and yet are much plainer withal than maps made elsewhere.

(h) Statistics. Population figures are usually combined with the index and seem helpful and appropriate, but some atlases add general economic or statistical charts, graphs, and tables. These features are not pertinent and had better be omitted. All statistics included should be the latest obtainable.

(i) Types of maps included, e.g., physical, railroad, historical.

(j) Contours. Are reliefs shown clearly? There is a great difference in this important point, and several ways of showing relief have been developed, e.g., by contour lines as on the United States topographic sheets, by shading by the layer method.

The representations of printers and publishers seem especially unreliable about the revisions and new editions of atlases. An announcement will promise to show "all changes since the war," and the maps will show new boundaries but no names changed or new boundaries and names of new countries but all other names unchanged. Errors and omissions are harder to detect in maps than in printed books, but the utmost examination should be made of every atlas considered for purchase.

A good hanging or revolving globe is useful in any reference room.

*Maps in books.* It is worth while to index single maps in books or unlikely places, especially if the library is stressing a map collection or if the item relates to local history. Better still is it to mount and catalog duplicate copies if they can be had.

*Guide books.* Travelers' guide books are much used in reference departments. They contain local maps, plans of cities, locations of buildings not found in ordinary atlases,

and much information about history, trips, scenic spots, transportation lines, historical and art monuments.

*Railroad maps and time-tables.* These generally give valuable and complete indexes of stations, many of which are not on other maps or in gazetteers. The tables of distances are often helpful even after the time-tables are out of date.

*Gazetteers.* Geographical gazetteers supplement maps. They give condensed statistics and information about the places named on the maps, frequently with references to more extended information. They aid pronunciation and show how place names were derived. Old gazetteers are especially valuable, and can often be used instead of old maps in locating places that no longer exist, or the names of which have been changed. Lists of place names, whether or not called gazetteers, are always worth saving, and will be used.

**4. Bibliographies.** A rapid survey of articles and books on bibliography reveals the names of twenty varieties, each earnestly sponsored by a reputable bibliographer. Many of them are ingenious, some a bit pedantic, a few impressive. Those that are most important in reference work are national, trade, general, and subject bibliography, although it may be said in passing that the reference librarian will do well to get acquainted with the other sixteen kinds. He can never know too much about bibliography.

The four most important kinds are thus defined by Miss Mudge:[1]

*National:* (1) a list of books published in a given country, or (2) a list of works about a given country.

*Trade:* bibliographies compiled primarily to aid the book trade by supplying information as to what books are in print or on sale, and when, where, by whom, at what price.

*General:* a list of books not limited to those of any period, locality, subject, or author.

*Subject:* a list of books or articles about any given subject.

The definitions show the high importance of each branch, and indicate the fields covered by each. This is not a book on

[1] Mudge, I. G. Bibliography. (Manual of library economy no. 24) A.L.A., 1915. o.p.

bibliography, hence the topic must be reduced to still lower terms by denoting subject bibliographies as probably the most used by reference librarians and for present purposes the one of the four topics to be most fully described and discussed.

To the reference librarian, therefore, a bibliography is primarily a list of books and articles about anything: the world war, Delaware, Daniel Boone, filaria loa, the plankton of Lake Titicaca. Obviously such lists are of the highest value. They are used to discover what books exist on a subject, which are the best or worst, their age, bias, price, size, source, location, authors, style, or history. Bibliographies are more than just lists of books. If fully and competently annotated, they are sources of reference material. Some are pleasant, almost exciting, reading.

There are already tens of thousands of such lists: entire books, pamphlets, periodical articles, lists appended to books, chapters or articles, footnotes, leaflets, and broadsides distributed by libraries. Their increase in number has kept proportional pace with the total number of printed books. It must do so, either in the form of printed lists or card catalogs, if the world is to know what has already been printed and continue to know even more exactly than it knows now. Bibliographies are the librarian's and scholar's catalogs, beacons, and verifiers. It would seem, therefore, that the right attitude towards anyone who has been willing to compile a bibliography should be that of simple gratitude.[1]

The necessity and value of bibliographies are recognized by governments, which both by subsidy and publication have sponsored some of the most important, by learned societies (one of the aims of the National Research Council is to establish abstract journals and full bibliographic apparatus for every major science), by commercial publishers, by libraries (the printed catalog card work of the Library of Congress is a sufficient citation), by individuals of wealth and leisure and disposition, and by the great foundations that are striving to advance knowledge.

[1] There are qualifications of this dictum, but this is not the place to go into them.

It is hard to overstate either the value of the best existing bibliographies or the need for more like them as adjuncts to any kind of research, but they are especially essential in library research. While isolated fact-finding is an interesting and often a thrilling indoor sport, yet the real responsibility, the most satisfying achievement of the reference librarian, is in directing and helping readers who seek not merely some or the best references on a subject, but who are vitally concerned to discover *all* its literature which may in any way affect a current or proposed piece of research. An increasing number of students, particularly of science, now use large libraries with precisely this aim.

*Bibliographic methodology.* There have recently appeared a few excellent books which testify encouragingly to the growing appreciation of college teachers for bibliography as an essential approach and aid to serious study in any field. They are so new, so good, and so significant of an inevitable larger recognition and insistence upon this attention to bibliography that a few of them are listed here. First named, and with the gratitude and admiration always accorded a pioneer is:

Langlois, C. V. Manuel de bibliographie historique. 1901.

Later and none less welcome titles are:

Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927.

Hicks, F. C. Materials and methods of legal research, with bibliographic manual. Lawyers' co-op., 1923.

Morize, André. Problems and methods of literary history, with special reference to modern French literature. Ginn, 1922.

Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924.

Wright, J. K. Aids to geographical research. American Geographical Society, 1923.

### Study Points for Bibliographies

(a) Compiler: a specialist in the subject or a trained bibliographer; a bibliographer incidentally or primarily?

(b) Scope
  (1) Complete or selected
  (2) Language limitations
  (3) Time limitations; date, period covered

(4) Place limitations; is it limited to books published in, by, or about one country, one city, or one college?
(5) "Material" limitations. Pamphlets, analytics, maps, manuscripts, government documents; which kinds are included?

(c) Arrangements; should be suited to subject and material
(1) Alphabetic; by author, title, or subject
(2) Topical; or classified
(3) Chronologic; by date of publications or by chronology of subject
(4) Combination of any or all of the above
(5) Geographic
(6) Literary form; poetry, drama, fiction, books, periodicals
(7) Indexes; should complement the arrangement chosen; does index refer to items, to pages, or to sections?

(d) Presentation
(1) Itemized; e.g., Northup, C. S. *Register of the bibliographies of the English language and literature*
(2) Narrative; e.g., Van Hoesen, H. B., and Walter, F. K. *Bibliography*
(3) Tabular

(e) Fullness of entry; must be consistent

(f) Annotations
(1) Descriptive; imperative
(2) Critical; helpful but risky *unless quoted from authority;* selected bibliographies are *ipso facto* critical
(3) Symbols; which may be used to evaluate books for certain types of readers or purposes
(4) Appendix; special lists for teachers, high schools, et cetera

(g) Location of copies of books described or cited

(h) Prices

*Abstract journals.*[1] A paragraph is due to these ambitious and admirable bibliographic projects which since the World War have taken on new form and vigor. *Chemical Abstracts,* perhaps the best example, aims at nothing less than a prompt printed record of every article in any way relating to chemistry in any journal in the world, with an abstract of its contents and full annual indexes to authors, subjects and formulas. This single enterprise costs over $100,000 annually, and it is but one of many. When there is a similar index for every department of knowledge, the paths of reference librarians will be smoother and shorter.

**5. Yearbooks.** In the "Suggestive list of one hundred reference books"[2] eleven of the titles fall into the present

[1] More fully described in Chap. 3, p. 41.
[2] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929. p. 318–20.

group. This may fairly represent the proportion of such books in the average reference collection, but it gives no just idea of their absolute number. There are hundreds of them, perhaps thousands.[1] Visualize statistically today the prolific family of Who's who, and lo! tomorrow brings another. And they increase not in numbers alone but in size. What can *Who's who in America* have fed upon to swell from 872 to nearly 4,000 pages in twenty-five years?—praise, perhaps, or a college education. Indeed, some of the more bloated and ungainly of the species have, like the amoeba, evolved by dividing and dividing again.

Certain distinct types may be cited:

(a) The Who's who type, familiar, successful, useful, but somewhat overdone just now by cheap and careless imitators.
(b) Statistical. Statistical annuals usually are government or semi-official publications treating of a single country, e.g., *Statistical abstract of the United States.*
(c) Almanacs. Those most useful to libraries are almanacs in name only, the purely calendar matter long having been submerged in the latest information about a country, or single subject. Examples are *Whitaker's* and the *World Almanac.*
(d) The yearbook. The most solid and enduring type. Statistics, brief biography, a pot-pourri of facts, which are the staples of the other types, in the best yearbooks are but the appetizing garnishings for substantial articles, monographs, all part of a current compendium for the field covered. Examples are *Annual register, American year book, Statesman's yearbook, Europa yearbook.* Time and successive editions improve these books and make them more dependable. Those that are owned by first-rate publishers, that can offer a career to a talented editor, that have at command a seasoned and sufficient editorial organization, that have made a reputation and are zealous to keep it, are marvels of compactness, accuracy, and impartiality. There are many of this kind, although perhaps more of second or third rate, which fall by the way after brief lives. This distinction is important, both in buying and in using such books. If, as has been said, one hundred years are required to perfect an encyclopedia, a third of that time will no more than bring to finest flower such an annual as the *Statesman's yearbook.* The back volumes of such a work are as worth keeping, as dependable and frequently consulted, as the volumes of a high class journal.

**6. Directories.** There are directories of lawyers, manufacturers, physicians, scientists, nurses, even of directors;

[1] Cannons, H. G. T. Classified guide to 1700 annuals . . . and yearbooks. Wilson, 1923.

of banks, colleges, schools, hospitals, newspapers, libraries, societies, and a host of other institutions, associations and persons; but it is the directory of those who live in a city, state, or region, that is first in mind when the name is mentioned and that is oftenest found in libraries of all kinds.

Every library surely will have its local directory, and will keep the back volumes, and in most communities of more than a few thousand there will be inquiries for others—for example, that of the nearest metropolis, marketing, or shopping center. Directories are inordinately expensive, especially when are considered their high original cost, brief period of greatest use, and the relatively trivial, impermanent, and duplicating contents. But some of them must be had. A few libraries maintain large collections of both old and new directories, chiefly as a useful supplement to collections in genealogy and local history. All libraries, however, will find a large use for old directories in tracing changes in business firms, establishing residence of persons sought; even the advertisements become contributions to economic and social history. The policy as to buying and collecting directories will differ in large and small cities. The average library will be sufficiently served with as complete a set as possible of its local directory and at most those of a few other representative or nearby cities. Even these will sometimes seem too expensive, and many libraries have arranged stated exchanges of telephone and city directories which serve most occasions. Because of heavy increases in price since 1917, many libraries that feel they must have a dozen or two directories now buy them only every two years. Sometimes an active chamber of commerce or local business houses will give the library year-old volumes.

As an instance of how many directories apart from the conventional city directory exist and are used by special libraries, the Business Branch of the Newark, New Jersey, Public Library has a collection of over 800 trade directories, of which a list and index has been printed.[1]

[1] Morley, L. H., and Knight, A. C. Mailing list directory and classified index to trade directories. McGraw, 1924.

In certain libraries and with certain clienteles the reference use of directories of all kinds is astonishingly large. The Newark Business Branch has about 2400 for which it spends $2500 a year. At least 40% of the use of the Business Branch is of the directory collection specifically. The extent and character of this use are well shown by the following extract from the library's monthly note.

"*Of what use are directories?* What particular use are these directories? Why should Mr. Jones ever need the Seattle directory or Mr. Smith the directory for Kansas City? Why are so many city directories used to answer the calls that come over the telephone? The obvious use, giving the address of a certain person in a particular city, is only a small part of the whole. Besides this, the manufacturer, using direct mail advertising, will wish to reach all the dentists or plumbers or steamfitters in cities of a certain size or section of the country. Is it worth while to enable him to increase his market in this way?

"His friend, who wishes to reach only retail jewelers, may use the same directories or any entirely different set. An insurance company can not decide whether a street address is meant for Grove or Grand. The city directory lists only the latter, so the papers can be drawn up correctly and without question. Mr. Jones dies without a will; a sister, Mrs. Hague, is supposed to live in Pittsburgh. Again the directory is called into play.

"In order to bring suit, another lawyer needs to know the names of the partners in Jones & Smith of Fresno. The city directory can furnish this. Data on the city, the names of the various city, county, state and federal officials, all are there, as well as a mass of other information.

"The trade directories are used from another angle. Here the manufacturer of a product known only under its trade name may be discovered; or the address of a manufacturer whose firm name only is known. This has helped many times when replacement of some part was necessary and the information about the manufacturer limited.

"The research student or statistician can solve many of his problems through this collection. He may discover, through directories, the subdivisions and ramifications of any industry; and in what sections of the country it is most fully developed. The purchasing agent who wishes to consider other sources of supply will find help; as will the sales manager looking for more customers in a given line.

"State directories fall into two groups: industrial directories or state gazetteers for a few states and such official publications as give directory information. Outstanding among these are the various legislative manuals which furnish answers for questions on state officials in other parts of the country, and help in many other ways."[1]

**7. Indexes.** A small group, but of an importance wholly out of proportion to its numerical strength, is represented

[1] From the monthly note issued by the Business Branch of the Newark, New Jersey, Public Library. v. 1, no. 5, September, 1928.

by the index as a separate, independent piece of work, not merely a dutiful and often rather perfunctory tail-piece to a book.

No argument is needed as to the utility of indexes, nor are there any limits to the gratitude of librarians for every good index. But it may, can, and must *be a good one.* There is no longer any excuse for a poor one. Indexing is now an art, not an accident. It has "principles" and a "methodology" clearly set forth in excellent manuals[1] which should be studied more than they are.

For study purposes, at least three kinds of indexes may be distinguished:

(a) Indexes to periodicals
  (1) Volume indexes, generally serviceable but too often lacking or obstinately withheld by publishers.
  (2) Series indexes (to ten, twenty, or fifty volumes). Both these and volume indexes are made by the periodical publishers. Really admirable indexes of these types are exceptional. More and better series indexes are "made in Europe" than in America.
  (3) General indexes, of which Poole is pioneer and prototype. Here America excels. There is no better series anywhere of indexes to groups of current periodicals with respect to form, workmanship, and promptness than the H. W. Wilson Company indexes. A variety is the general index, complete to publication date, to a single periodical, e.g., A. L. Guthrie's *Index to St. Nicholas, 1873–1918.*

(b) Indexes to complete sets, of either books or periodicals. Examples are the index to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and to the *Bibelot.* An interesting instance of indexing raised to the second power, an index to an index, is the series of subject indexes to the great *Royal Society catalogue of scientific papers.*

(c) Form and subject indexes. To short stories, songs, plays, essays, recitations, or to portraits, local history, genealogy, government documents. These often closely approach bibliographies. They are of great value. Examples are A. R. Hasse's *Index of economic material in documents of the states of the United States* and A. P. C. Griffin's *Bibliography of American historical societies.*

Besides these formal printed indexes, almost every reference librarian has, either completed or under way, his own

[1] Wheeler, M. T. Indexing principles, rules and examples. 3d ed. rev. New York State Library, 1923.

index to sets or volumes, nowhere else treated, of parodies, prize fights, pseudonyms, or planets.

**8. Catalogs of books.** This type of book is akin to a bibliography. For the present purpose a catalog is a list of books in *one place*. A bibliography, therefore, is not a catalog, but a catalog may be a bibliography. True the books cataloged may not stay long in the "one place"—permanence is hard to affirm of anything. A book may be cataloged by the British Museum, Quaritch, or Sotheby. Libraries are sometimes owned or merged and duplicates sold; the bookseller awaits only the first buyer with the price and the auctioneer scatters his treasures at once. But the catalog is made because, for however brief a time, the books noted in it were together. Otherwise it would not be a catalog. And though the books are scattered, the printed record remains.

The catalogs useful in research are of two kinds, library and commercial.

Library catalogs may be of either public or private collections. The catalogs of the former will usually exemplify the best cataloging; the latter will oftenest record the choicest book treasures. There is an appreciable movement of rare books from private to public libraries as the latter become better housed and administered, but libraries print catalogs less and less and the reference librarian or bibliographer is often puzzled to trace a book which has found the seclusion of a library whose treasures are no longer heralded by printed catalogs for use outside the building. Nevertheless such printed catalogs as those of the British Museum Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale, Library of Congress, John Carter Brown Library, and the library of E. D. Church are of inestimable service in many departments of a large library. Lists of such catalogs appear in Mudge, *Guide to reference books*,[1] and in Van Hoesen and Walter, *Bibliography*.[2]

Commercial catalogs come from booksellers and book-auction houses. Their accuracy, utility, and appearance range from execrable to transcendent. Their chief use in reference

[1] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929. p. 315–17.
[2] Van Hoesen, H. B., and Walter, F. K. Bibliography. Scribner, 1928. p. 244–45.

work is in book selection and the maintenance of special collections or the strengthening and rounding out of a general library. Only the best of them offer workmanship entitled to rank as finished bibliography though they furnish many clues. Such detailed and careful catalogs as come from Quaritch, Maggs Bros., Lathrop C. Harper, A. H. Clark, Henry Stevens, and John D. Sherman have great and permanent utility. To a lesser degree so have most catalogs on a single subject which serve as handy bibliographies and are worth keeping temporarily in classed arrangement. The hundreds of lists which read "Catalog of rare and interesting books on many subjects" are of no enduring value, many are not even worth the time and trouble of reading, a few are so poorly printed as to make any use a task. Auction catalogs should be kept by libraries having sets of *American book prices current.*

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## Thought Questions

1. What are the points which mark a first-rate index?
2. Compile your own list of the first twelve annuals and yearbooks for the reference collection of a small college library.
3. On the basis of the study points given in this chapter, compare and evaluate three of the standard unabridged dictionaries.
4. Make a generous list of typical questions not concerned with the pronunciation, definition, or derivation of words which a selected unabridged dictionary can answer.
5. Compare two American encyclopedias according to the study points given in this chapter. Which would you select for a small public library which could afford only one of them? Why? Would you choose the same one for a small college library? Why?
6. What arguments would you use to convince a reader that a particular encyclopedia article is the best material for his purpose?
7. What regions should a small public library represent in its first collection of geographical maps?
8. Draw up a list of study points for the evaluation of each of the following:
   (a) Biographical annuals
   (b) Statistical yearbooks
9. What are the essential good points of:
   (a) General periodical index
   (b) Index to a book
   (c) Index to short stories
10. Can there be too many "Who's whos"? Why?
11. Prepare a list of study points for subject bibliographies.
12. Rearrange the eight types of reference books treated in this chapter in the order of their importance in reference work. Give reasons for any changes.

# Chapter 3

## REFERENCE MATERIALS—GROUPS AND CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Works of individual authorship**
2. **Works of multiple authorship**
3. **Serial publications**
4. **Minor groups**

The conventional reference books of the types described in Chapter 2, while forming the first line of defence, are by no means all of the world of print with which the reference worker must be thoroughly familiar. In the smallest libraries it may be possible to have practically all the reference resources in one room or alcove, but in large libraries it must never be forgotten that back of the dictionaries and cyclopedias, back of any or all books which may be segregated as an "R" collection, stand, rank upon rank, thousands of other books which are equally the province and the mainstay of the reference librarian.

Despite the fact that some libraries collect, preserve, and seem to regard as proper library material such things as lantern slides, movie films, paintings, phonograph records, and similar museum material, the meaning of the term "reference material" as used in this book is restricted to products of the printing processes and the book arts. Even so the aggregate is tremendous, the variety surprising. Within this appropriate category fall not only books proper (those which are or easily may be bound) but pamphlets, maps, manuscripts, music, photographs, broadsides, posters, and perhaps other sorts of printed matter which could with difficulty be placed in any of these classes.

With the many and perplexing physical forms in which all these items present themselves the reference department is not primarily concerned. Their organization for the easiest and most effective use is for classifiers, catalogers, and binders. In this the reference department is sometimes con-

sulted, may indeed properly intervene independently, although its chief solicitude is that the materials get into the library and become instantly available.

Consider for the moment printed matter only, chiefly books and pamphlets. The attentive reference worker will soon observe that certain classes of material with definite earmarks emerge. These classes, while broader and perhaps more numerous than the conventional types, are yet equally distinct. In general their traits are less those of sharply defined form and content than of source, authorship, and manner of issue. These groups are of interest, significance, and great importance to students and librarians. Their characteristics, extent, availability, and reference values may profitably be considered in some detail.

**1. Works of individual authorship.** Books by a single author were formerly more numerous than those of multiple authorship or than serial publications. Today those which are of reference value are certainly second to the group of serial publications, and perhaps in third place. This is mainly because other publishing agencies have arisen, cooperative in kind, such as governments, endowed foundations, learned societies, colleges and universities, research agencies. Some of these have recently initiated or greatly expanded their publishing activities. They offer new and attractive inducements to authors and scholars.

Furthermore, knowledge and specialization, increasing hand to hand and by leaps and bounds, have made it unwise, usually quite impossible, for a single author to undertake a work of the range and sweep of Gibbon or Grote. Works covering a long period, a large subject, a broad field, today are composite or a group of monographs. Rollin and Rawlinson have no present-day prototypes. Bancroft and Hildreth have been superseded by The American National and Chronicles of America.

On the other hand, there are certain influences which tend to swell the number of single-author books.

Competition among textbook publishers or houses with marked special "lines," and the requirements of publishers'

"series" tend to multiply, often quite unnecessarily, the books on a single subject, and often to produce a poorer book than one already in the market.

Pressure by the publisher upon the pride or pleasure which authors feel in seeing their books increase is responsible for a great many books consisting not of original matter but of papers, addresses, essays, reviews, first published in widely scattered places and too often reprinted with no or scant statement of the place of original printing. Such books have their library uses. For perennial or intensive use, with schools and debaters for example, they spare the original sources. But large libraries which regularly receive most or all of the journals, reports, and transactions from which the new books are made up do not contemplate with complacence the expenditure of so much money for books which, when closely examined, prove to be mostly duplicate matter. New publishers, especially, urge authors to prepare new editions or to write needless books.

For reference purposes, the total number of one-author books must be heavily discounted by subtracting practically all juveniles, fiction, much poetry and general literature, and a mass of cheap and trivial stuff in all subjects.

When all is said, however, it is the best of the books for which one author is responsible that form the enduring staple of reference material. They are turned to as a court of last resort, leaned upon heavily with that comfortable assurance which is usually inseparable from the name of a recognized authority or a reputable publisher. They have these merits:

(a) A fuller treatment and argument than is usually found in journals or possible in addresses to learned societies.

(b) More careful and thoroughly considered work than is often submitted to public or professional gatherings. Assuredly plenty of poor and careless books are printed, but when a formal, presumably definitive, form of the author's work is in preparation, it offers incentive as well as opportunity for extension, revision, and betterment, and should result in his best work. It is also usually indexed in such a way as to prove a quick aid.

(c) A personal point of view, even a bias, a hearty partiality, which may nowhere be so appropriately exhibited or indulged as in one's own separate book, and which is of prime interest to the reference librarian.

**2. Works of multiple authorship.** Not so long ago, one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five years, reputable and voluminous encyclopedias were largely the work of one man. Aristotle may aptly be cited as the first encyclopedist. Johnson's encyclopedia was a favorably known standard work in the United States until a generation ago. Samuel Johnson literally wrote his great English dictionary, and the names of Webster and Worcester are even now difficult to detach from the successors to the former personal property and achievements of those industrious compilers.

Today dictionaries and encyclopedias have moved from group 1 to group 2. Their production keeps busy a large, expert, often a permanent, staff. An elaborate "organization" is in order. One edition follows close on the heels of another. Revision is continuous. Lists of contributors fill many pages. The budget staggers the great publishers, and gives pause even to rich foundations. George Smith gave $430,000 to the *Dictionary of national biography.* Adolph Ochs has started the *Dictionary of American biography* with a modest $500,000. The fourteenth edition of the *Britannica* is said to have cost $2,000,000.

Among books of multiple authorship are found most of the conventional reference tools. The first three fundamental books in a reference collection (of course after the *World Almanac!*) are dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas. Close behind is the lusty family of anthologies, almost all of multiple authorship. The reference worker must know all these thoroughly, their differences and their resemblances, not alone in order to know which to buy but which to use and how. In buying dictionaries and books of quotations the only requisite rule is to buy as many as the library can afford. Each is likely to supplement every other. Even encyclopedias and anthologies may well be acquired freely with only the qualification that they be at least reasonably satisfactory

bibliographically, i.e., well indexed, cross-referenced, arranged, equipped with bibliographies, etc. While many libraries, especially the small ones, must, in order to conform to book budgets, pick and choose among these essential books, yet the rule is a safe one that no library can have too many of them. Their characteristics are treated in greater detail in Chapter 2.[1]

**3. Serial publications.** A serial is a publication which appears in successive parts or numbers, usually at regular intervals, and which from its character, auspices, or name seems to carry assurance of indefinite appearance.

A half-century ago group 2 (books of multiple authorship) contained the books most used and deemed most important in reference work. Today this palm clearly has passed to the group of serial publications, and this despite the fact that most of the cyclopedias (particularly those in single fields), dictionaries, and anthologies, used in the reference department today, have been made or started within the thirty years just past. Group 2 has by no means stood still. The additions to it have been notable in both quantity and quality. But the present group 3 (serial publications) is peculiarly the creation of our time. Its amazing growth mirrors vividly the spirit of the age. The newspaper, while conceding much in accuracy, more in good taste, and most in intrinsic worth, must yet be reckoned with as reference material. The periodical or journal, at its best far more solid and enduring in content, at its worst worse than the best newspapers, meets the feverish demand for tabloidal up-to-the-minute-ness. Government documents reflect both in kind and number the march toward socialism. The copious publications of learned societies testify to the new power of conference and cooperation.

There is so much solid and significant printed matter in all this that the most strenuous and perplexing task of the librarian today, in the effective organization of material as well as in its selection and interpretation, relates to this vast flood of serial publications.

[1] See page 14 ff.

The following distinct and specific forms will be considered more at length:

(a) Periodicals
(b) Newspapers
(c) Government documents
(d) Publications of learned and other societies
(e) Reports of institutions
(f) Annuals (directories, yearbooks, almanacs, etc.)

(a) *Periodicals.* Perhaps most important and useful of all the forms of serial publications are the periodicals, certainly so if judged by the eagerness with which their successive issues are awaited, the avidity with which they are used, and the insistent requests which assail libraries for new titles. The special periodical devoted to the interests of a single subject or group has multiplied in the last fifty years like the rabbits in Australia. The great libraries of the world regularly receive from eight to ten thousand. Many American libraries receive from three to five thousand, most of which are kept and bound. No library ever has as many as its patrons think it should have. For no class of material is there stronger pressure on the book funds. Most reference libraries spend nearly or quite half of their book money for the purchase and binding of serials, most of which are journals. It would be easy to find reference librarians willing to urge the wisdom of spending three-fourths or more of the total book budget for periodicals. All this proclaims, and none too emphatically, the paramount value of this class of reference material, a value more exactly specified, as follows:

(1) Most of them are indexed either in one or more of the general periodical indexes or in the separate indexes covering a long run of volumes or a series of years, compiled and published from time to time by the best journals. More journals are being better indexed every year.

(2) Periodicals supply the latest word on their subjects, frequently more authoritative and satisfactory than the latest or best book, and are from one to five years ahead of equally useful matter in book form.

(3) In some subjects it is possible to get from journals alone all that has been found out on a topic or problem. Even

when this is not so, it is almost always the periodicals that are first used, often to the neglect of more important sources.

(4) The subject range of periodical literature is wider than in any equal number of volumes as easily available. It yields articles on many topics about which no book has been written or which are not represented in the book collection of the library.

(5) In the best journals the articles are as reliable and as well presented as in the best books.

(6) Authorities in some fields contribute to periodicals rather than write books.

(7) Periodicals furnish the best short articles (summaries, digests, abstracts, abridgments) so much called for and so useful in reference work. A notable development under this head is the greatly increased number and quality of "abstract" journals especially in the sciences. The list is a long one. They are tools of research of the greatest importance and necessity in large reference collections. In this day of liberal inter-library loans and with the *Union list of serials*[1] the abstract journals become increasingly useful to more and more libraries. If their indexes could but be cumulated they would be ideal.

*Periodicals versus pamphlets.* In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the announcements of new discoveries and the manifestoes of new religions, politics, or science were commonly published in book or pamphlet form. The journal article has systematized and largely taken the place of the pamphlet, leaving to the latter (save as it is a reprint of journal articles) a far more ephemeral and less important content and role. This is admirable from one angle but from the library point of view it greatly increases the work necessary to organize the material effectively. A separate pamphlet, having no connection with a series or volume, complete in itself, can be treated as a unit, cataloged under author and shelved with other books on the same subject. It is highly desirable to treat them so. But periodicals, being composite

[1] The union list of serials in libraries of the United States and Canada. Wilson, 1927.

books, require indexes which are laborious and costly to make, and when general in character, periodical sets can be physically located on the shelves by form only and not by subject.

And here intrudes the chief annoyance of the careful librarian of any research collection or department. Mr. Bishop apostrophizes it thus: "How long can it last? Will the whole literary output of the world soon be in periodicals? Shall we always be paying subscriptions, writing postcards for title-pages and indexes, preparing for binding, waiting for binding, paying for binding, completing sets, renewing our worn out *Poole's Index* and *Index Medicus?*"[1]

*Selecting, binding, discarding.* It is hard to make no mistakes in choosing reference periodicals and in deciding which to bind, discontinue, or discard. The point of view is quite different from that of the lending department. Both viewpoints are practically and helpfully discussed for the small library in Walter, F. K., *Periodicals for the small library.*[2] As a library grows the reference work increases and it may be set off as a separate department. The selection of its periodicals then presents new phases. Speaking from the reference point of view alone and for all but the smallest libraries, the periodicals best worth buying are those:

(1) of established reputation and authority
(2) in fields where the latest information is especially important or in request
(3) which strengthen the library's strongest collections
(4) which promise permanent value
(It is conceded that many useful gifts, perhaps even a few purchases, may be worth handling, keeping unbound for a year or two, and discarding)
(5) new journals which meet (3) or (4) above and are sponsored by promising editors and publishers
(6) in fields where material is in request and the library has little or nothing fresh
(7) that are best indexed (this most emphatically)

While there are essential journals that are nowhere indexed or that do not by their library classification sufficiently index

[1] Bishop, W. W. Backs of books. Williams and Wilkins, 1926. p. 326.
[2] Walter, F. K. Periodicals for the small library. 5th ed. A.L.A., 1928. p. 7–23.

themselves (as do, e.g., *The potato journal, Golfing, The orchid review*) yet in general the reference value of a journal currently unindexed is far less than one regularly treated in the *International index to periodicals* and similar tools. This last criterion, no. 7, is sound and sensible enough; yet it is advanced with full knowledge and keen appreciation of the value both present and potential of certain classes of journals which are not and never will be indexed, for example, trade journals, useful in many libraries, almost necessary in some, yet which seldom give themselves even volume indexes.

Criteria for selection disappear as the library grows. For example, every new, naughty, radical, or insurgent movement or cult in literature, art, or religion has its convoy of passionate, shortlived little journals, often unappreciated at the moment, later proving to be historically notable as heralds or prophets, but of course indexed nowhere—as well index the song of a lark! What libraries have sets of *Others, Youth, The Lyric,* and a dozen other of the zealous martyrs who died that verse might be free? There are times when the reference librarian would recommend the purchase of everything that no other library is known to have!

(b) *Newspapers.* There are those who doubt or deny the solid and dependable reference value of newspapers. Others think it so slight as to be almost negligible, and consider that newspapers' opinions are so warped and colored by partisanship, their contents and often their statements so influenced by commercial consideration as to fall far short of reputability. Some have thought very highly of their value in library work. James Ford Rhodes, the historian, was an apologist for them.[1] He admitted that the impulse of an American writer in citing newspapers as historical evidence is to adopt an apologetic tone, but this he thought a mistake.

All these people are right. Newspapers are of indubitable importance for certain kinds of information. Their immediate value is chiefly for *fact,* although even for fact many allowances must be made. They have a permanent value for opinion—both editorial and public—as mirrors of the time.

[1] Newspapers as historical sources. Atlantic Monthly 103:650.

They are helpful while fresh, especially for local and current happenings, but of relatively little value unless indexed. And projects for indexing newspapers, either singly or collectively, have seldom flourished. The path is strewn with bibliographic wrecks. Good indexing is expensive, and while great newspapers seem to be money-makers, there appears to have been little disposition to spend any of their profits for indexing. The *London Times* and the *New York Times* are honorably exempt from these strictures, and libraries owe them a great debt of gratitude for the admirable indexes maintained for the last fifteen or twenty years, and now apparently well established.

It should be noted, too, that a good index to one paper serves pretty well with all papers, especially for the really important factual news items. This statement unfortunately does not hold for the *Christian Science Monitor,* which contains much important, well prepared matter, useful to libraries today and tomorrow. An index to this paper would be welcomed by many libraries. The new *United States Daily* provides a good index, and in other unusual and thoughtful ways seems desirous to approve itself to libraries and to posterity.

Desirable as indexes are, it is surprising how much newspapers are used without them. Historical students have testified to a preference for going through them leaf by leaf. And many dates about which information is sought from newspapers can readily be determined from other sources and the clue furnished for a search.

Another odd thing differentiating newspapers from most current books is that their reference value (not their paper, alas!) improves with age. Any library with a large newspaper collection will confirm this statement, and it is further emphasized by the expensive processes tried out and briefly employed by a few great reference libraries to preserve the present wood pulp paper[1] and the seemingly high prices which libraries willingly pay for the copies on all-rag paper that are

[1] Lydenberg, H. M. Preservation of modern newspaper files. Library Journal 40:240–42. April, 1915.

now furnished bound by the *New York Times* for $170, and by the *United States Daily* for $100.

Their sufficient and continuing library value conceded, the question really is: Are newspapers worth what they will cost to this particular library? For they cost a great deal. Any of the great dailies costs $10 to $12 for subscription, $24 to $48 for binding (the *New York Times* costs $72 per annum for clean copies daily and Sunday, bound reasonably well in twelve volumes), *London Times Index* about $50, the *New York Times Index* about $10. When to this expense are added the cost of special shelving, desks and tables for their easy use, and the cost of handling and cleaning, a newspaper file becomes a formidable fixed charge.

A minimum newspaper program for any library is the best local paper, received by gift (and bound) if possible, and the nearest or best-indexed or one-that-will-be-most-read of the high class metropolitan dailies; and if to these the *Christian Science Monitor* can be added it will admirably supplement them and duplicate them surprisingly seldom.

In a library which has strong newspaper collections, especially of American papers before 1850, the numerous lists and catalogs[1] of the holdings of other libraries are useful. They are akin to "union lists" and "lists of special collections" and enable the librarian to tell students where other titles or volumes may be found. A few of the rarer early American newspapers like the *Boston News-letter* and the *Georgia Gazette* have been photostated and are thus available in all the important newspaper collections.

All of the above assumes the binding of newspapers, which limits their future use to heavy, awkward, bound volumes. They are also pretty widely used for clipping and are often solicited as gifts or bought solely for such use. The clipping is mainly of local items, feature stories, or for special subjects stressed by the library, e.g., genealogy, or financial articles for the business branch. Many libraries which maintain bound files index the bound volumes or the current file copies. Mutilation of bound volumes by readers may be

[1] See Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929, p. 25–27.

reduced by clipping duplicate copies and making popular, current items thus available through the clippings file. Subject scrapbooks of clippings are used here and there, being convenient for debate material and local history, and providing a good way to keep such clippings as are no longer of frequent use in the transient file but still worth preservation.[1]

(c) *Government documents.* For the present purpose a government document is any printed paper, map, pamphlet, or book originating in or printed with the imprint of or at the cost and by the authority of any office of legally organized government. Very few libraries in this country maintain large, live collections of documents from all or many countries. Two notable exceptions are the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library. But there is no library so small or so special in aim that it will not find some of them useful. In medium and large libraries and particularly in college, special, and reference libraries, they form an indispensable part. Those of our own country group naturally as federal, state, and city documents, and in quantity and library value they stand in the same order. Our federal government is the largest publisher in the world; every state annually prints hundreds of documents, often thousands; and it is probable that American city documents are more numerous than state although less in request for reference, and of local rather than general interest. A complete set of American government documents, could one be made, would exceed a million separate pieces. Their reference value is high. They are all in our own language; they relate to our own country and to all parts of it; they contain no light or trivial matter (if the *Congressional Record* be excepted); they are popular and scholarly, sometimes both; they are well indexed as a class; and over a considerable period their average of accuracy and authority is high.

Libraries are the carefully selected and preferred custodians of government documents. Only in libraries are documents collected and cared for in any systematic and intelligent way

[1] For a longer treatment of clippings, with bibliography, see Woodworth, Florence. Clippings. In Pamphlets and minor library material. (Manual of library economy no. 25) A.L.A., 1917.

with regard to their utmost present and future availability for consultation. To libraries the casual or the serious student must alike resort when a government document is in request. Thus a special obligation would seem to rest upon libraries not only to arrange and organize documents for quick use but to have personal knowledge of their series, nature, content, sources, and above all to know intimately their bibliography and the printed guides and aids to their use.

As to subject matter they are of two kinds: administrative and research. The former are chiefly the routine stated reports of departments, bureaus, and offices. Often filled with perfunctory statistics, formal, dull, pretty much the same year after year, they are yet the necessary business records of government. Far more numerous, interesting, and incomparably more used and useful in libraries, are the research documents. Until a generation ago these were mainly the product of the federal government but latterly, states, and to a lesser extent, cities, through studies, surveys, research, more expert administration and guidance, and especially as a result of the progressive exercise of more and wider powers (social, scientific, police, regulation, control, welfare, etc.) have greatly swelled the volume of significant document material.

Few outside of libraries know and appreciate the range, the utility, the attractiveness, the intrinsic value which mark the best of the scientific, social, historical, and technological publications of government agencies and offices.

Foreign documents other than those of Great Britain and Canada are not widely used in this country outside the larger libraries. Publication and sale of British documents is centered at Stationery Office in London and a *Monthly List* of them is printed. The British Library of Information, 44 Whitehall Street, New York City, keeps on hand a small stock of the latest documents and will order others for American libraries. It also sells current lists and indexes.[1]

Documents deserve far more publicity than they get. Too

[1] For further information about this office and its service see Fletcher, Angus. The British library of information. Library Journal 49:413. May 1, 1924.

often they are hustled into a separate room or alcove, sometimes remote or inaccessible, unarranged or arranged differently from other books in the building, and rather ignored. Treatment of this sort does not promote their reference use. They would be better known and more used if:

> Documents received as gifts were first examined sharply enough to keep out useless or inappropriate items;
>
> Documents were classified, cataloged and shelved exactly like other books. This is being done in some libraries, both small and large;
>
> Attractive documents (and there are plenty of them) were promptly placed on the "New Books" shelf;
>
> There were occasional exhibits of new and attractive documents, state and local as well as federal;
>
> Some anniversary local history exhibits were grouped around old village or city records, newspapers, pictures, broadsides, or books;
>
> Each document as added to the library was examined by staff members as carefully as are new books.

These publications have the following merits for reference work:

(1) Authority. They are official source material with the intrinsic value and permanence which this implies.

(2) Range. The rapid extension of the functions of government is reflected in its publications. These are most numerous touching the everyday problems of administration such as finance, immigration, commerce, labor, history, and politics. Of increasing range and worth are the scientific series dealing principally with the subjects that have claimed official attention in developing a new country, e.g., agriculture, ethnology, natural resources and their conservation, geography, geology, and the public domain. The scientific publications include many notable popular titles of practical value to practical people.

(3) Cost. For a century libraries have been preferred depositories of government publications. Hundreds of libraries get free the series they select from the government's long list. Libraries that must buy are charged nominal prices.

(4) Indexes. There now exists a series of usable indexes complete from the beginning of our government. These seem

firmly established and are better today than ever. Dozens of separate department indexes supplement the general ones.[1] There are numerous auxiliary subject indexes and bibliographies. All these should be noted by and known to every depository library and to others using our federal documents largely.

The following points hinder the reference use of government documents:

(1) Lack of indexes to state and city documents and grievous delay in publication of the principal index to federal documents.

(2) Difficulty of knowing just where and how to get desired items. This is due to frequent changes in the organization of state and federal departments, bureaus, and offices, to the fact that few states have a single agency charged with the sale or distribution of documents, and to confusion and misunderstanding as to the unfortunately duplicated distributing functions and activities of congressmen, legislators, and the issuing governments and offices.

(d) *Publications of learned and other societies.* Much of the knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, that has accumulated during the past two centuries is not bound in complete, separate books on single subjects but is stowed away in journals or in monographic contributions, proceedings, transactions, reports of a composite character prepared and published by an increasing number of learned societies.

Not all of these societies are "learned." Often they most emphasize comradeship, inspiration, and the social and educational results of travel and conference. It is of course a far cry from the American Historical Association to the National Association of Master House Painters and Decorators, yet they have common aims, a serious purpose; and the term "learned societies" is a convenient, and has come to be a customary and not inaccurate, group name.

The interest of libraries in these societies is in their research and publishing activities. Nearly all of them hold

[1] Clarke, E. E. Guide to the use of U. S. government publications. Faxon, 1918. p. 248–58.

meetings at which papers are read; many have committees at work on interesting or important research resulting in printed reports; and the publication of a journal or official organ is usually their major function. The Royal Society of London, chiefly through its publications, has been a most effective agency in influencing the growth of science. It would be difficult to overestimate the value of its *Transactions* and their effect on the progress of science.

These articles and publications on all subjects are of the highest importance but are so numerous and so scattered, so varied in character, that no single man of science, no matter how broad his interests or how comprehensive his knowledge or how admirable his personal library, could possibly keep track of or recall even the items of interest or value to his own work. Abstract journals, useful and promising reference tools as they are, yet provide an index to only the very recent body of literature in a few subjects. Not every scientist can have a copy at his elbow. Many must rely upon libraries and upon other means of search.

The reference value, merit, and usefulness of this material vary widely. Publications of the best societies are of high order, both in substance and, less frequently, in form, and furnish a class of printed matter which not only can not be disregarded by reference libraries but must be definitely and systematically acquired and studied with regard to the peculiar character and manner of issue and distribution.

It devolves upon libraries to collect, arrange, promote, and facilitate the use of this semisubmerged material, the very existence of much of which is almost unknown, in any exact or intimate way, save to the learned world, and the extent of which is often a surprise even to scholars. And more than all, it becomes imperative that reference workers know much of its origin, character, and availability, and discover ways to bring it quickly and surely to the service of staff and patrons.

Publications of societies have the following merits:

(1) Promptness. This is achieved through journals which are the organs of the publishing societies. They report the

meetings of the societies and print at once the most important papers and reports presented.

(2) Timeliness. Topics discussed at meetings usually are those of the moment, or, if old, those which some new discovery or research has revived.

(3) Authority. The best of the learned societies and journals are above the reproach of partiality or of holding briefs for the plaintiff. This is particularly true of the scientific, as science stands of course for the pursuit and discovery of the truth above all partisanship. Yet it is interesting to note what a tortuous typographic chase coy and elusive Truth will sometimes lead her votaries.

These publications have certain marked defects:

(1) Inaccessibility. This is due to the fact that they are usually unavailable through regular trade channels; that their distribution, and frequently the edition, are limited to members or subscribers; to unbusinesslike ways of handling; to the itinerant nature of officers and headquarters of many of the societies. For reference workers, however, the chief defect is the lack of indexes, or even of recent regular or current lists of societies themselves, or of their publications. This inaccessibility is so marked that it must sometimes actually hinder the diffusion of knowledge.

(2) Greatly varying excellence and standards of publications, due to wide differences in the amount of money available year after year, to the differences in personnel and ability of successive secretaries or editors, and to the presence, or the absence of notable men or women in the membership. For example, the publications of Davy and Faraday brought new distinction to the *Transactions* of the Royal Society, and the contributions of Brinton lent a similar glory to the volumes of the American Philosophical Society during the years of his life and membership.

(3) Changing bibliographic features, such as poor or careless editing, resulting in inauguration of new series with each new editor or secretary; broken paging from number to number; poor or no indexes either to numbers or to volumes; varying sizes of the same publication to suit the whim of a

new secretary or printer; erratic and frequently changed typography; and, perhaps above all, the often vague, untraceable, historical and genealogical vicissitudes, mergers, changes of name, ownership, or character. The faults listed in this paragraph are seldom noted by the individual member; indeed they do not affect his current personal use of journals, bulletins, or reports, but when these must be bound into volumes, referred to by correct names, by volume number, year, and page, accompanied by title-pages and indexes, differentiated clearly from other identical titles, and from titles which have preceded the one in hand, in the same or another series, it is at once obvious why the library can not always and instantly produce volumes which are frequently imperfectly cited by readers or even in footnotes and bibliographies.

The growth of these societies in size, number, and influence in the last twenty-five years has been enormous, and no less remarkable is their extreme differentiation. Many of them began as general societies, with names indicating overlordship or interest in a wide field. But as universities have grown, schools of many new kinds have arisen, the sciences and subjects taught have increased in number and thus become narrower and more highly specialized, these general societies have broken up into sections, and as these sections have grown stronger the tendency has been to break up into still other separate societies: for example, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Chemical Society, American Electro-chemical Society. There is now no cult or group of workers so small or so insignificant that it does not have its own national association, often with branches or affiliated organizations in every state and locality. Here are the names of some which show how comparatively few must be the adherents to and how small the fields tilled by some of them: American Association of Local Freight Agents Associations; American Association of Manufacturers of Sand-lime Products; National Association for Promoting the Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor of Ireland; National Association of Agricultural Implement and Vehicle Manufacturers.

The following from Mr. Mencken's *Prejudices: Third series,* p. 226–7, indicates that the number, aims, and activities of these agencies attract attention even outside of libraries and the strictly learned world:

"Someone told me lately that there are now no less than 25,000 national organizations in the United States for the uplift of the plain people and the snaring and shaking down of forward-lookers—societies for the Americanization of immigrants, for protecting poor working-girls against Jews and Italians, for putting Bibles into the bedrooms of week-end hotels, for teaching Polish women how to wash their babies, for instructing school children in ring-around-a-rosy, for crusading against the cigarette, for preventing accidents in rolling-mills, for making street-car conductors more polite, for testing the mentality of Czecho-Slovaks, for teaching folk-songs, for restoring the United States to Great Britain, for building day-nurseries in the devastated regions of France . . . for saving the Indian, for sending colored boys to Harvard, for opposing Sunday movies, for censoring magazines, for God knows what else. In every large American city such organizations swarm, and every one of them has an executive secretary who tries incessantly to cadge space in the newspapers. Their agents penetrate to the remotest hamlets in the land, and their circulars, pamphlets and other fulminations swamp the mails."

We may greet Mr. Mencken's catalog with a smile or a shrug—the fact is that the publications of these societies (learned or not as you please) *do* fill library mails, that despite their partiality they *are* useful in reference work.

Geographically considered, learned societies are:

(1) International. There were nine such recorded in 1850, ten hundred and seventy in 1910. An important activity is printing. Their meetings often take the form of congresses at international expositions or in such neutral lands as Belgium and Switzerland. The resulting publications are of high importance in the learned world but very hard to get, as is keenly appreciated and described by W. W. Bishop in his *Backs of books.*[1] For years the Institut International de Bibliographie at Brussels, under the name "Office Central des Associations Internationales," organized such meetings and groups, issued a yearbook, *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale,* and collected a large library of their proceedings and publications. In America the National Research Council acts as a cooperative organization of scientists, and the

[1] Bishop. W. W. Backs of books. Williams and Wilkins. 1926. p. 284–86.

American Council of Learned Societies functions similarly for humanistic studies, although their activities are mainly related to America. The International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation under the League of Nations, with offices at Geneva and Paris, at the moment is the most active such agency.

(2) National. The National Education Association is a characteristic example. Many associations have affiliated local chapters or branches in states and cities, and have an intricate and sometimes confusing organization. Most are finding a way to increased membership and solidarity and have been able to set up permanent headquarters, with salutary effects upon their work of propaganda and especially of publication.

(3) Local.

*State.* Some state associations (e.g., the Wisconsin and Massachusetts historical societies and at one time the Michigan Political Science Association), fortunate in money, in talented membership, or in able devoted officers, publish matter of the highest importance.

*County.* Of negligible significance in the matter of all save local history publications.

*City.* Occasionally as important as national or state societies, due usually to the combination of contributors of outstanding eminence and ability and an able editor. Examples are Davenport Academy of Sciences; Buffalo Historical Society.

*Regional.* A late development which has produced many strong societies publishing matter of high importance to libraries. Examples are Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Southern Education Association, New England History Teachers Association.

(e) *Annual reports of institutions.* The reports of railroads, banks, business and educational corporations, libraries, foundations, clubs, etc., are a numerous group of serials, but of less reference importance than the other five groups here described. When printed at all (this applies particularly to reports of business corporations) they usually can be had free. Many libraries try to maintain relations that will bring them regularly a subject selection of such material, but probably

few libraries undertake its exhaustive and persistent collecting. Much of this material appears originally in various and unusual places, or is first available at second-hand; e.g., often the only or the fullest reports of corporations are made to the secretary of state or other officials in the state in which they are organized. Many educational, philanthropic, or welfare bodies are incorporated by special act of Congress or of one of the states. They report to the incorporating government agency and the report thus becomes a government document. Certain institutions are controlled by cities, and their official reports may be merely filed in manuscript with the proper officials, being printed, if at all, as a city document, in the local press or in part in separate form for limited distribution. Transportation corporations report to their stockholders, to the Interstate Commerce Commission, to public service commissions in several states, in different terms and for different purposes.

These reports in turn are summarized, statistically combined with others, digested, abridged, their identity and significant substance sometimes hidden or almost lost. Parts of them are used by commercial agencies, by "services," by brokers, until the disinterested and truth-seeking reference librarian is sorely puzzled to discover the whole report and nothing but the report.

Their frankness and credibility have been seriously questioned in some remarkable articles by W. Z. Ripley.[1] Indeed it must be kept in mind constantly in using material in this group that the statements made are *ex parte,* that every such report is in a sense a brief for the plaintiff, that an expert, disinterested analysis might read quite differently. These strictures touch most closely reports of corporations operated for gain.

Despite these qualifications, this group has distinct merits, viz.:

(1) It is *source* material.

(2) It is in most cases latest *official* information. It may

[1] More light!—and power too. Atlantic Monthly 138:380, 667; and Remedies for eradicating big business evils. World's Work 53:128.

be more accessible in abstract elsewhere, but that does not affect the value of the first-hand facts and figures.

(3) It has *permanent* value, not all of it in every library but some of it in every library and all of it in some library.

(4) It is *live* material. It recounts the actual, practical conduct of affairs; it is the antithesis of theory.

(f) *Annuals.* Directories, almanacs, yearbooks, etc. These must be named here again, among the serials, and as one of the most important groups of reference aids, so important, in fact, and so typical of the conventional reference book that they are more fully treated in the preceding chapter.

**4. Minor groups.** Besides those major groups of reference material already noted, there are numerous minor groups, or, more correctly, sources, from which come many quite distinct kinds of printed matter. They not only may with profit be visualized separately, even if hurriedly, by the librarian, but must be studied, as well as intimately known and used, with respect to such characteristics as point of view, purpose, prejudice, sponsorship, constituency or audience aimed at, disinterestedness. This information or impression is as likely to be acquired by wide general reading (especially of a carefully chosen group of journals and reviews) as by examination of the publications themselves, which sometimes are a bit bashful about revealing all that one would like to know of them.

A few examples are:

(a) *Dissertations.* These are the printed theses or researches submitted by graduate students to universities in all parts of the world, in partial fulfillment of requirements for advanced degrees. They number several thousand annually, and form a sharply defined, distinctive, highly specialized group of reference material, the value and use of which is limited to college, university, and large reference libraries. Continental Europe and South America furnish most dissertations. The American output, while increasing, is still but a few hundreds annually. The lists and indexes[1] are

[1] For bibliography see Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929. p. 28–32.

numerous and fairly adequate, but the dissertations themselves are hard to organize for thoroughly satisfactory library use.

(b) *Services.*[1] A popular brand of "instant post 'em" now numbering (almost incredibly) about three hundred strictly commercial services, about one hundred association and non-commercial services, at least an equal number of government services, and nearly four hundred periodical services. The rather rare best ones are expensive but far cheaper than the work involved if any one library should undertake it. Their reference value and character are more fully discussed in Chapter 5.

(c) *Surveys.* These have sprung up in shoals in the past few years. They came from and at the instance of foundations, research institutions, organizations that exist chiefly to "survey," governmental investigating bodies, individuals riding on the wave, etc. An elaborate technique for producing them has been evolved. They are usually meaty, informing, suggestive, and in much request.

(d) *Books that are not books—but tools.* Digests, citators (a term familiar to law librarians), telephone and trade directories, intermediate cumulations, advance sheets and time tables, are examples of a large and growing class of material with which librarians must reckon. They are not research material; many of them are lent by publishers and taken back as new editions appear; they are indispensable, very costly, short-lived; they add nothing to the solid resources of the library; they are true books in no sense save that as printed and bound matter they serve to reach the fact through a wilderness of print.

(e) *Separates.* An interesting and important function of the learned society in diffusing knowledge is performed not only by the regular edition of its printed publications but to an even greater extent in the rôle played by separates. All societies and journals will make (in addition to authors' free

[1] For lists of existing services, see Special Libraries Association. Handbook of commercial information services, 1924, and a Supplementary list issued in 1927, by the Research Department of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce.

copies) any number of reprints of an article which would otherwise be buried in a volume of limited edition sent only to members; and the wide distribution of these authors' separates to students the world over adds greatly to the reach and influence of the original publication.

They reach libraries in quantities, and it really is a question to know what to do with them. In most libraries separates appear to be treated precisely like pamphlets. If their special character is to be considered, it may be noted that those from journals which the library regularly gets are duplicates; yet some of these may be nowhere indexed, and such separates will seem worth classifying, perhaps cataloging. Those reprinted from sources not in the library will presumably be kept; but shall they be treated as books or as pamphlets? And each additional serial set bought by the library will be likely to duplicate some of them. Shall any be kept, or all? A sensible compromise is to keep those not in the library at the moment of receipt, and duplicates only for subjects in which the library specializes intensively. In some libraries the cataloging of such material is much shortened by blanket subject references in the main catalog to subjects represented in the vertical files or shelf boxes where pamphlets are kept. This method would seem to make them reasonably available. Their reference use is much facilitated if the pamphlet containers are occasionally emptied, the contents examined, sorted, and *either* all the pamphlets (especially separates) on one subject *or* all the pamphlets by one author on one subject bound in volumes. For example, the entomologist will appreciate having the twenty or more reprints of Beutenmüller's articles on the cynipidae in one bound volume, even though they may all be in a dozen volumes of a half-dozen different sets in the library. The reference staff may well spend spare time in making up such pamphlet volumes.

Special libraries or large general reference libraries will find it well to keep more duplicate separates than other libraries, and to classify them more closely and catalog them more fully.

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## Thought Questions

1. Do you agree with the author that movie-films, victrola records, oil paintings, lantern slides, wampum, are not proper library materials? Give reasons.

2. Give two reasons for discounting the reference value of a one-author book.
3. What would be your policy in regard to the preservation of newspapers in a small public library of 50,000 volumes; in a high school library? Why?
4. With a particular library in mind, outline in some detail a plan for making government documents more generally useful to the public.
5. What types of society publications should be represented in a medium public library?
6. Select three periodicals in different fields and indicate their strong and weak points as reference material.
7. Would a small public library be justified in indexing the local newspaper? Why?
8. What considerations should influence any library in indexing society publications? Give reasons.
9. During your practice work in the reference department, keep track of the groups of material you use in answering inquiries. Compare your list with those of your classmates, and determine the relative importance of each group so far as one particular library is concerned.
10. How would you handle separates in:
    (a) A small public library
    (b) A large reference library
    (c) A special library
    Give reasons in each case.
11. What are five typical questions that suggest newspapers for the quickest answer?

# Chapter 4

## REFERENCE MATERIALS—ACQUISITION AND ORGANIZATION


1. What is a reference book?
2. The processes of selection
3. Quick decisions
4. Liberal recommendations
5. Minor materials
6. Negative selection, "weeding"
7. Organization of reference materials
8. The vertical file
9. Special indexing and cataloging


Regarded broadly, the selection of reference books in most respects is much like the selection of books for the library as a whole or for any other part of it. The same considerations of community, present collections, specific uses, and income are the chief and controlling factors. There is to be a volume on book selection in the present series, and to it will be left all statement and discussion of general principles and their application in different kinds of libraries. This chapter will consider only those aspects of book selection which arise out of and which color or affect the work of the reference librarian and department.

**1. What is a reference book?** In a narrow sense a reference book is one that is designed exclusively for consultation in the library; generally speaking, it is not adapted for reading through. Thus defined, it is sharply differentiated from the books which ebb and flow through the lending departments. It is not, certainly it should not be, outside the interest and knowledge of those departments, but just because there *is* a reference department which is concerned with such books and the work they can be made to do, their discovery, selection, and to some extent their organization will naturally and properly be initiated by the reference staff. This staff will welcome, indeed will invite, help of all kinds from the entire library personnel and from the public.

There are at once large classes of books (the "right wing," shall we say?) which will be and will remain primarily within the interest and administration of other departments. Juvenile books, fiction, and the major part of *belles-lettres* are outstanding examples, though the number of such conspicuously non-reference classes is small.

At the other extreme, the "left wing," are the conventional reference books, the number of which constantly swells as the conception of them broadens. In many libraries the segregated "R" collections number thousands of titles. Despite the more liberal view of what is a reference book, their number in every public library is fewer than the non-reference books indicated in the preceding paragraph.

Between these wings lies the neutral core or "center" of the library, neutral because, as the average public library is organized in this country, it is under the specific jurisdiction of no single department. It is this non-fiction which the lending departments constantly are striving to get more read. To this same core the reference librarians as constantly resort for material supplementary to the formal reference books. It would be hard to say which of the two departments uses it more in public libraries. In other libraries the collections are more nearly all reference books and the above special and divided jurisdictions do not obtain, or are less sharply defined.

**2. The processes of selection.** In the public library, then, the lending departments naturally are responsible for initiating or approving the purchase, replacement, or duplication of books in the classes which are their sole or major concern. Similarly the reference department acts in the domain of reference books. All departments, staff, and public unite in suggestions for the main body of the library. That the reference and circulation departments, as knowing best the demands on the library, are looked to for the main initiative in book selection is shown by the fact that several large public libraries which are distinguished for extreme care in choice of books devolve most of the work on these two departments. Some libraries regularly index reviews, generally in the reference department, for guidance in selection.

Frequently all suggestions are cleared through a staff committee or a regular "new book" meeting of heads of departments, branch librarians, and other members of staff. And over all is the librarian with the veto power and equally with power to buy, select, or suggest independently. The above applies or may apply also to new periodicals, sets of journals or serials. Often the librarian must veto an excellent title purely from lack of funds. Especially must finances be regarded in considering subscriptions to new periodicals. Each new title will be a fixed charge against library funds as long as the periodical exists and remains worth buying, not only for the subscription price but for binding.

What, more specifically, is the reference librarian's part in all this? It may and in practice does range from casual, informal recommendations to full responsibility for the selection of all reference books or even to the chairmanship of an effective approving body. It should in every case be a large part, for the reference staff, more thoroughly and better than any other persons in the library, knows its collections, its studious constituency, and the requests made upon it in the fields of study and research. And from the reference department must come the interest, the knowledge, the effort necessary if that great core of the library, in which no other department has quite the same kind of interest, is to be strengthened, balanced, and kept up to date.

The very questions that are asked at the reference desks are constantly useful in book selection, especially those which fail of satisfactory answer. The neglected subjects and weak spots thus revealed should be covered and strengthened at once.

There is what may be called the basic selection of reference books, illustrated by either the formation of reference collections in new libraries and branches, or the strengthening of an existing collection in a single field or subject. For such work there is ample provision of thoroughly useful aids. First of all is the *Guide to reference books*,[1] frequently revised, and between revisions supplemented annually in the *Library*

[1] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929.

*Journal,* usually for January. The *A.L.A. catalog 1926,* will for some years be a stout staff on which reference and standard book selection may lean heavily. And *The Booklist* with its careful classification and exhaustive volume indexes is especially helpful. It would be more used if there were a cumulated index to, say, volumes 1–25.

The work of current selection by the reference department must be well considered, up to date, sufficiently comprehensive, and somewhat formal. There should be effective routines clearly formulated and understood, and personal responsibility precisely fixed. The following program indicates the nature and range of such work. The order of the steps noted will vary in different libraries. Certain parts of this work in some libraries may be better located in the order department, e.g., the checking of second-hand and auction catalogs.

(a) Current lists to be checked for purchase, e.g., *The Booklist, Publishers' Weekly, Bulletin of the Public Affairs Information Service,* the monthly catalogs of United States and state documents.
(b) Selected reviews or journals to be examined, sometimes indexed, e.g., *Book Review Digest, Yale Review, London Times Literary Supplement,* and in fields where the library is strong, such representative journals as specialize in book notices or reviews, e.g., *American Historical Review, Science Progress, Geographical Review.*
(c) Publishers' circulars and announcements to be examined and checked.
(d) Selected second-hand catalogs to be read and checked.
(e) Auction catalogs to be checked for bids.
(f) Patrons' suggestions to be encouraged, considered, and answered.
(g) Prospectuses and sample copies of new periodicals to be considered.
(h) New approval books to be examined.
(i) Staff or patrons' reading or book club organized to report on new books.
(j) Library book committee regularly meeting to consider recommendations from all sources.
(k) New subject bibliographies examined.
(l) Bulletins from selected libraries consulted.
(m) Depository libraries will find it profitable to read the Library of Congress galley sheets at least in some subjects.

This list might be longer without exhausting the things that are or regularly should be done by all large libraries in deciding what books to buy or beg. Many other libraries do most of them. College and special libraries are provided, by

the suggestions and recommendations of faculties and specialized constituencies, with a broader working basis for book selection than have public libraries. It is difficult to believe that any of these thirteen items are not or may not well be done at least every month by the reference department in every library large enough to have one. Probably items (d), (e), and (i) would disappear first from the routines of most reference departments, especially in small and moderate sized public libraries.

Nor will this ritual be perfunctorily performed by librarians who put as much care and conscience into book selection as it well deserves. While there are many titles, especially of new books, that for good reason instantly certify themselves for purchase, especially to those persons who know authors, books, subjects, and publishers, and while, on the other hand, it is possible in actual practice to over-refine the principles and processes of book selection, its best performance is a worthy, difficult, and highly important piece of bibliographic reference work. Every step in the program above set down is likely to be accompanied by excursions to the catalog, to bibliographies, to the shelves, to trade lists, to reviews, to other books, in order to decide a hundred nice points that affect decisions for each library.

Such questions as the segregation as "Reference" of a large part of the entire library, the duplication of many or few titles for both lending and study, the extent to which "R" books shall be lent,[1] must be settled by each library for itself, but every such decision affects the problems of book selection.

3. **Quick decisions.** Keenness to discover and alertness to possess new material are as important for the reference as for the circulation department. It is embarrassing and often worse not to be ahead of the demand, especially for books in some subject which the library particularly affects. If in doubt (with the materials in hand, the evidence all in) about an apparently good book, give it and the library the benefit of the doubt. A good book will attract readers; it is

[1] For a discussion of this topic see Chap. 17, p. 273–74.

much more gratifying to watch this happening than to be obliged to ask inquirers to wait till a desired book can be ordered.

**4. Liberal recommendations.** Recommend everything that seems to be of real value. If this procedure unduly strains the budget, let the adjustments be made later. The chief librarian will doubtless prefer the sort of department head who pushes his own department hard, who knows what he wants, and generally wants more than he can have. It should be remembered that the reference departments are charged with the chief responsibility for the solid worth and the proper proportions of book collections, the strengthening of weak spots, the maintenance of notable special collections, the filling of gaps, the purchase of periodical sets, the careful nursing which gives distinction to a library attaining and maintaining such a stock of materials as will enable a competent staff to satisfy itself (a thing often harder than to satisfy the public) in interpreting the collections for study and research.

**5. Minor materials.** All that has been said up to this point has applied mainly to books and periodicals—what may be called major materials. There is also a vast field of minor materials—pamphlets, maps, pictures, catalogs, propaganda literature, bibliographies. This group is valuable, ephemeral, elusive, responding but scantily and slowly to ordinary routines for conventional book selection. It is useful in debate work, in subject package libraries, for up-to-the-minute desk inquiries. How is it got? Chiefly by eternal vigilance and main force. Really it is not "selected" so much as discovered, encountered, dug up. The best excavating is usually in special subject journals which scrupulously note every brochure sent them, e.g., the *American Historical Review* and the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register.* The *Bulletin of the Public Affairs Information Service,* the alternating *Booklist* departments, pamphlets and government documents, and the lower alphabet in *Publishers' Weekly* are also fruitful. The librarians of special library departments such as technology, business, medicine, insurance, will discover many

of these through such examination of new journals and books as becomes necessary in the day's work. Other ways to get useful pamphlets and maps:

(1) Write to headquarters of religious denominations.
(2) Address headquarters of political parties during campaigns.
(3) Circularize chambers of commerce as listed in bulletins of the U. S. Department of Commerce.
(4) Get time tables, vacation folders, itineraries, from railway and steamship companies.
(5) Request yearbooks from women's clubs.
(6) Request trade catalogs from firms selected from directory of manufacturers.

One large class of such material, one much in request, is college catalogs. Complete lists of colleges are at hand. Courteous requests are easy to indite, but every reference librarian will testify to the difficulty of getting and keeping full sets of the publications of even a selected list of colleges and for the current years.

Clippings are esteemed in many libraries, chiefly on local subjects from local papers, on finance, on topics of the times, and, especially in extension reference work, for debate work and package libraries. The work involved is always attached to one of the reference departments. The selection is a simple matter but it is debatable whether indexing is not better than clipping. Clippings, especially from duplicate copies of newspapers, preserve file copies from destruction and are time savers as well.

**6. Negative selection.** By this term is meant discarding material from the library because it no longer is desired or deemed of any use to the discarding library. This is sometimes called "weeding." There are two kinds of weeding—genuine and pseudo; and two kinds of material weeded—major, i.e., bound books, and minor, i.e., pamphlets, pictures, maps, clippings.

*Genuine weeding.* This is the definite discard from a library of *titles*[1] that are formally a part of it; undeniably a delicate

[1] As distinct from duplicate copies of titles still represented in the library. The discard of such duplicates is undeniably weeding, yet it is oftenest a problem for the circulation department.

business, demanding librarians (not clerks), judgment, and firmness. What becomes of these books is not the point, which is that they have been thrown out. There seems to be very little of such discarding of major material from American libraries today and not a startling amount of minor material. A few libraries report the elimination of obsolete technological and theological books, non-current directories and college catalogs, but the old tradition of "throw nothing away" still is strong—so strong indeed that some faint-hearted, ultra-orthodox librarians report the tentative storage of contemplated discards for a trial term or last chance before they finally are cast out.

Worn-out books frequently are not replaced. If they are duplicates, such action is not discarding. If they are not, such practice is rather common though some libraries try to replace every worn-out book, and it is probably a safe statement that few libraries deliberately weed out sound, non-duplicate books. Titles of permanent value should be replaced.

Minor material, consisting of vertical file items, clippings, pictures, pamphlets, leaflets, is rather freely discarded, sometimes at an annual housecleaning, and is eliminated either from personal knowledge of its obsolescence or because its accession date is more than one, two, or five years old. Even here, however (as will appear below under pseudo-weeding), it would seem that little of this material actually gets destroyed.

Most discussions on weeding are general. It is agreed that dead books should be discarded from libraries, but few have dared to define "dead" or to lay down a rule for knowing a dead book from a live one. Speaking now only of reference materials, some kinds that it would seem wise to remove from the "R" collection, the pamphlet files, or in some cases even from the library are:

(1) Books and pamphlets on topics once debated but now settled, e.g., parcel post, woman suffrage.

(2) Annuals and college catalogs more than a year old, especially those unchanged in character from year to year.

(3) Material so ragged and worn as to be repulsive even if not totally useless.

(4) Any item which the library would not buy if it did not own it.

*Pseudo-weeding.* Meaning, of course, weeding that is not what it seems. The ebb and flow of "R" books and open shelf collections to and from the stacks; the removal of pamphlets from vertical files or boxes to form bound volumes; the making of scrapbooks from passé clippings; the transfer of pamphlets from business branch or civics department to the history department, where of course they are in for life! None of all this is real discarding. When well judged and carefully done it is but making permanent, material which was first judged to be of but temporary worth. A few libraries report a sort of cautious temporizing when vertical file contents are removed from the active file and kept for six months more in a temporary file and when books which seem candidates for discarding are similarly held in limbo, "sentence suspended."

*Net results of weeding.* Viewed broadly, it appears that very little "weeded" matter is permanently lost to the combined library resources of the country. Books and pamphlets genuinely discarded from libraries seldom are destroyed. They go into "duplicate" collections. They are in constant and considerable sale and exchange through inter-library lists of offerings and through personal visits and selection. The directories, college catalogs, and legislative manuals spurned by *A* are eagerly and properly annexed by *B* and restored to honorable estate. One library's poison is another's meat. There is somebody for everything. What is finally destroyed becomes negligible.

7. **Organization of reference materials.** Speaking strictly, the organization of all library materials, whether destined for the library as a whole or for a single department, would seem to belong to the catalogers and classifiers. Yet in deciding the larger matters of policy such as a system of classification; whether its application shall be broad or close, by subject or form; the segregation of special "letter" collection; the

most useful type of catalog; and even in fixing smaller routines and practices, no departments are more entitled to be heard than circulation and reference. And there usually are the fullest consultation and cooperation among the different departments in both large and small phases of this most important work. The cataloger works with the public in her mind's eye but seldom realizes this optical image in the flesh. The reference librarian, however, is the constant familiar of both public and cataloger, the admirable and impartial intermediary, ubiquitous, omniscient. Small wonder that catalogers have come to rely so confidently on him, and on his colleague in the circulation department, as the trusty advisers who shall keep bright their sometimes dim and misty conceptions of that great public whose vagaries and mental processes they so strenuously are trying to predicate and predict.

The above is true of books and of that core of the library for which organization policies and practices must be uniform, and which is exempt from specific attachment to any single department. But if almost unanimous testimonies from the field may be believed, the cataloger seems to have agreed to leave entirely to the reference department the organization of that mass of minor material, today so up to date and indispensable to every reference worker. This is probably because:

(1) Vertical file material usually is of immediate and often of temporary value and should be in the hands of the reference department as soon as possible. This can not easily be done when it is handled through a catalog department.

(2) Reference librarians are better judges than catalogers of what is best placed in the vertical file and they become much better acquainted with its character and value if they handle it themselves—a valuable asset in its use.

Certain it is that whether from choice or from necessity most reference departments select and prepare for use all this miscellaneous "vertical file" material.

Sir Leslie Stephen somewhere says, "With the accumulation of material there should be a steady elaboration of the

contrivances for making it accessible." Two such contrivances are the card catalog and the vertical file. The latter alone concerns us at the moment.

8. **The vertical file.** What reference librarians did with pamphlets before the day of the vertical file is now difficult to guess. It has come to be the favorite container for an increasingly prolific yet indispensable flood of lowly, heterogeneous, ephemeral print, and in some special libraries it holds much the larger part of the whole collection. Not infrequently a single very useful and busy library will be squeezed into fifty or more vertical file drawers, through which, year after year, in the form of accessions and discards, there flows a steady and substantial stream diverted from the main flood to furnish power for some financial or industrial mill.

(a) *The material.* To rehearse once more the various rivulets which combine to form this flood, there are pamphlets, clippings, maps, pictures and prints, photographs, bookplates, broadsides, posters, sample copies and odd numbers of periodicals, manuscript bibliographies and lists, correspondence about reference questions handled, reprints and separates.

This "minor material" has at least one invariable characteristic: each item is *unbound;* there the line is strictly drawn. In general libraries, from all unbound material received, there is separated for routine treatment all pieces that are parts of periodicals, serials, sets or volumes which regularly are kept by the library in such completed form. The remaining hundreds of single, unattached items are then usually left on the doorstep of the reference department. And what is done with them there? A few perhaps are selected as worth binding and thus, elevated to the rank of books, form the acquaintance of the catalog department and of the more spacious shelves of reference room or stack. The others are scattered among envelopes, manila folders, various kinds of pamphlet boxes, binders, special cases of all kinds and sizes, the shelf nearest the reference librarian's hand *and* the vertical file; but the last named gets most of them. It should get even more, for the effect of this distribution of minor material

among so many independent files and containers is one of undue scattering. Not uncommonly a single library has a half-dozen or more separate arrangements of this material; sometimes the same things, e.g., subject bibliographies, are kept in two or three places, depending upon whether they are printed, typed, manuscript, or upon their form and size. Each library seems to have worked out its own plans, which are often different from all others. The best special libraries offer the most instructive examples of well-organized miscellaneous unbound material in vertical files. In some libraries there do exist routines, apart from the reference department, which care for all pamphlets not specifically requisitioned by it, maps, and perhaps other groups of this minor material. The present paragraphs are concerned solely with that aggregate which the reference department, quite as much from choice or insistence as from necessity, has elected to take and organize. Considerations of economy and efficiency suggest the fewest kinds and numbers of files reasonably possible.

(b) *Its organization.* A wholesome principle is to have minor material in the fewest possible places. Despite its cost and space-wasting bulk, the vertical file is the most convenient container. A half-dozen four-drawer units should, in all but the largest general libraries or departments, take care of, in a single alphabet, practically all such material as is necessary or useful in the reference room, except such large and specially treated items as maps and posters. If a collection of pictures is maintained, additional equipment will be required. The arrangement usually is alphabetical by subjects, although some libraries use Cutter numbers for the subjects, as short and convenient symbols for marking the items, folders, guides, and drawer labels. The subject headings used in the *Readers' Guide* make good vertical file headings. New subjects are there promptly noted, and adequate cross-references furnished. Author entries seldom appear in the vertical file. They sometimes, with supplementary subject entries (when a pamphlet treats of more than one subject), form a card index or catalog of the vertical file material. It seems an open question whether such a card catalog is a necessary or wise supplement to a

vertical file. Should not such a file be complete in itself, thoroughly self-indexing? If an index or catalog supplement is made, it will greatly increase the work of organizing and discarding. Certainly if card catalog entries are made for vertical file items, as is done in some special libraries, each item so treated should be plainly marked as having been cataloged, so that the cards may be removed from the catalog when the item is discarded. In general libraries it would seem that any items worth outside supplementary entries are worth binding and cataloging officially.

The vertical file is a salutary unifier. It substitutes one collection for several. Bookplates, clippings, portraits, house organs, travel folders, and similar items may all appear behind their respective captions in a single vertical file rather than in separate scattered collections or containers. The guide cards can plainly indicate sub-arrangements by owners, by subjects, by firm names, etc. Some libraries that do considerable reference work by mail, index such of the correspondence as relates to topics of search. It should be possible to incorporate this index into the vertical file.

Some of the material usually accumulated at the reference desk, e.g., bibliographies prepared, or notes on reference questions handled, may well be transferred to the file. There should never be material or reference to material on the same subject in two places in the same small library or department, although duplicate items may usefully be filed and indexed in several places.

A desk file[1] on cards, of fugitive information or of items too recent to be indexed, is kept within arm's reach at most reference desks. There are often added (especially when there is no separate information desk) local material, names of readers interested in special subjects, reviews of recent or important books, rough references to periodicals or books in other local libraries, names of sponsors for knowledge, etc. All this information is helpful, much of it is most useful and convenient on cards, but as much as possible of it should be consolidated with or kept in the vertical file. Some of it may

[1] See Chap. 6, p. 112, and Chap. 7, p. 126.

best be placed in the public catalog. The tendency, and a persistent and mischievous one, is to multiply files, to duplicate references or material among them, to waste time in looking in several places instead of one, to minimize the value of a good card catalog by withholding from it entries for periodicals in other libraries and analytical entries made and kept at the reference desk.

(c) *Eliminating vertical file items.* This important process should be (1) regular, (2) drastic, (3) competent.

(1) Revision must be *regular;* otherwise it is very likely not to be done at all. The summer season's calendar should carry as a fixed, not a movable, feast the notation "Clean out vertical and desk files." It is helpful to date plainly, and on its front, every item as inserted, and every folder at each revision. Then at the annual clean-out every item more than one or two years old is reconsidered, usually by the reference librarian, and destroyed, passed on to the general collections of the library, or re-dated and returned to the reference file. Some libraries originally date vertical file accessions one or two years ahead, and claim this is helpful in elimination. Some libraries report that reference files are pruned "continuously" and "as used," not regularly. This method has the advantage of weeding out the subjects most in request, and of bringing to the process the practical point of view raised by actual questions and use, but it is likely to mean a minimum of attention, to the vanishing point.

(2) Revision must be *drastic,* or the file will be jammed to bursting with items which have been superseded by books, or are no longer of first importance, with torn, dirty, useless duplicates—all of which must be constantly pawed over by the staff. It should be remembered that in most libraries many items removed from temporary reference files are not destroyed, or lost forever, but go into permanent containers. The reference file should be kept live, fresh, current. Too often requests from the reference department for additional vertical file units can properly be met with the injunction "Weed out the present ones."

(3) Revision should be *competent.* Someone who knows both the material and the work must finally pass upon withdrawn items. In most libraries this decision rests with the reference librarian, although in others the chief librarian passes on all items which are marked for destruction.

This insistence upon the importance of regular revision must not obscure or minimize the equal importance of keeping the vertical file neat, clean, orderly, not overcrowded, well supplied with guides and cross-references, the drawers equipped with such subcontainers as will keep the material upright.

(d) *Additions.* A reservoir must have inlet as well as outlet, else the water becomes stagnant or disappears. There must be a constant flow of new material into the library, and from this the reference librarian will select the best for the vertical file. In some libraries, chiefly the smaller ones, he handles all pamphlets thus. Many such and valuable additions will come unasked, advertising matter and especially propaganda preachments, many of them cleverly disguised in the robes of impartiality.

But really worth while free material is less abundant today than ever before. The library staff must itself initiate the acquisition of most of it and pay for most of it.[1] The reference collections must be kept up to date, for three-fourths of the typical vertical file material is of most value within a few months of its printing.

**9. Special indexing and cataloging.** The reference staff sometimes will think it useful or even necessary to index or catalog material not so treated by the catalogers. There should be a distinction between indexing and cataloging. The latter is the business of the catalog department, which should be consulted about all such work as seems desirable. It probably is not desirable, administratively, to have cataloging done in other departments.

Indexing reference material is a different matter. It will always be done on cards. If it seems clearly useful to index a local newspaper, or some journal or annual report, this is

[1] See section, Minor materials, p. 67.

proper work for the reference department, although such projects should be carefully considered, as they sometimes are easier to start than to keep up. The indexing of local history is always useful, and from its nature is not likely to be done elsewhere as thoroughly as in the reference department.

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## Thought Questions

1. A medium public library desires to make readily available, for reference use, local history material in local newspapers. In what ways may this be done? Which is preferable and why?

2. Will pamphlets placed in the reference department vertical file be most usefully classified by the reference or the catalog department? Give reasons.
3. Give reasons for and against "weeding" books (i.e., titles) out of a library.
4. For the most effective reference work, which of the following seems preferable as a basic principle for organizing a library's books:
   (a) Subject classification, in one great group
   (b) Separation into subject collections located in departments, e.g., art, history, science, sociology; and each carefully classified
   (c) Grouping by form, either in one or in separate collections, e.g., drama, poetry, college catalogs, periodicals, biography, fiction, directories
5. How would you organize the selection of reference material in a department of a medium sized public library having a staff of four?
6. To what extent would you duplicate books in the permanent reference and lending collections in:
   (a) Small public library
   (b) Medium sized public library
   (c) College library
   Give reasons in each case.
7. What policy would you adopt in regard to lending strictly reference books in each of these three libraries? How will this policy affect the selection of reference books?
8. What would be your guide in determining the subjects on which to collect clippings in
   (a) University library
   (b) Medium public library
   (c) Special library
9. Give at least three factors which would guide you in weeding books from a reference collection.
10. If you were in charge of the pamphlet and clipping file in a large reference department, what features would you introduce to aid you in keeping the material up to date and easily accessible?
11. State the advantages and disadvantages of the vertical file in the reference department. If used, what kinds of reference materials would you keep in it?
12. Would you buy new books, unfavorably reviewed, for subject collections for which the library was renowned? Give reasons.
13. Are there any "dead" books in reference work? If so, what kinds?

# Chapter 5

## INTER-LIBRARY COORDINATION IN REFERENCE WORK

1. **Inter-library loans**
2. **Union lists of periodicals**
3. **Repertories. Union catalogs**
4. **Lists of special collections**
5. **Library of Congress**
6. **Information services**
7. **Photostat**
8. **One great library**

No theory of reference work is any longer adequate which thinks of it in terms of the book resources of a single library or even of a single city. Every reference worker must number among his active resources the book collections of the country as well as his city. And he must use men as well as books. All cultural and especially all informational agencies must be known to libraries, and brought into organized relation with them, thus effecting a great library synthesis. It will relate every library, your own in particular, no matter how large or how well organized and indexed, to every other library, especially to those with which it logically or naturally is entitled to seek such relations. The closeness of these relations will depend on the alertness of each librarian, upon the degree to which he keeps informed of the possibilities for service to his own library which reside in the several agencies described in this chapter, and upon his known or announced readiness to reciprocate. The libraries of a single city or region may well frame a somewhat formal understanding which shall prevent duplicate buying of reference materials. Within reasonable limits such cooperation may replace rivalry and extend community reference resources.

*After the library, what?* The serious investigator (and this should be as true of the reference librarian vicariously investigating or aiding investigation) today no longer rests content with printed or even manuscript sources of information. He desires to meet or reach others in the same kind of work. There are many questions which the reference librarian who

knows his sources and his community can answer far more quickly and completely by using the telephone than by ransacking all his shelves and indexes. No source is equal to the expert, the authority who is actually doing the work every day. Even his secretary or office assistant can often tell more than can be learned from the latest books. But first one must know who are the experts and authorities, where the precise work under inquiry is being done. It is also well to know or find out whether the people doing it are willing to tell what they know. Experts and authorities in commercial laboratories, factories, and offices are usually concerned with, sometimes jealously guarding, trade secrets, and it is scarcely proper for libraries to inquire in directions where this is likely to be the case. But of public research laboratories such as those of the Rockefeller Institute, the State Health Department Laboratory at Albany, the biological station at Wood's Hole, and those of most universities or research foundations, it is not improper to make inquiries which may often get data in advance of publication. In every locality the chamber of commerce, farm bureau, associated charities are available. Many men and women, too busy doing interesting things to stop and write about their work, will talk about it, or specific aspects of it, for a few minutes if rightly approached.

And just here comes in the special library as an information center usually available to other libraries. But not even the special library, or the most specialized, is by itself significant in this large view of reference work unless somewhat formally coordinated with others. Indeed, specialization, special libraries, special collections are opposed to coordination. They spell analysis, not synthesis.

It is now in order to notice particularly some of the agencies which recently have worked toward a closer coordination and which have in them far greater possibilities than have yet been apprehended. Before they are resorted to, however, it should be very certain that the utmost resources of the home library and locality have been fully utilized. Even if no formal record is kept of local, outside resources, the librarian and staff

always have knowledge of them. In the larger cities useful directories often list educational institutions, welfare organizations, civic and social agencies.

**1. Inter-library loans.** Most libraries are willing to lend books to other libraries. There is no central library, office, or bureau which supervises or clears this work or makes rules governing the details of its practice. There has been much discussion of this matter since Mr. S. S. Green[1] first proposed it in this country, and there has grown up a certain uniformity in practice which is best stated in what is sometimes referred to as the "existing code." This is a report to the American Library Association by its Committee on Coordination.[2] A group of interesting and careful preliminary statements of the purpose of such loans is in *A.L.A. Bulletin,* 1912, 6:96–101,[3] and these should be studied with the "code." Recent full statements of the rules of six large libraries (five of which borrowed and lent over 27,000 volumes last year) appear in the *Survey of libraries in the United States.*[4] This literature all has to do with loans for the use of mature scholars for declared studious purposes, though even this statement is further restricted by the Library of Congress to *"unusual* books to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge." With these restrictions, American libraries are less liberal than European in this matter. Dr. Bostwick, in the last edition of his *American public library,* says, "One thing that interferes with free interchange at present is the fact that most large libraries refuse to lend certain books and certain classes of books. There is no way of ascertaining these in advance, and a librarian can not therefore promise a client definitely to obtain a book by inter-library loan."[5] Two interesting sessions of the College and Reference Section of the American Library Association discussed this question at

[1] Green, S. S. The lending of books to one another by libraries. Library Journal 1:15. September, 1876.
[2] American Library Association. Committee on Coordination. Report. In A.L.A. Bulletin 10:349–51. Papers and proceedings, July, 1916.
[3] American Library Association. Committee on Coordination. Report. In A.L.A. Bulletin 6:96–101. Papers and proceedings, July, 1912.
[4] American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States. A.L.A. 1926. v. 2. p. 223–29.
[5] Bostwick, A. E. American public library. 3d ed. rev. and enl. Appleton, 1923. p. 80.

Atlantic City in October, 1926, and revealed considerable dissatisfaction with the conservatism of the two libraries—Harvard and the Library of Congress—which have had most to do with fixing the present practices, and this even after listening to two prepared statements from representatives of these libraries.

All of the above and the literature cited refer to one kind of inter-library loan. There is another and very different kind which lends many thousand more books than the first, and which pays little or no attention to some of the rules in the "code." This is the lending done by such state libraries as those in Oregon and New York, by some state universities and library commissions, by many considerable libraries to smaller neighbors. In such loans the time limit is more liberal: sometimes the sending library (under parcel post) pays going charges and exacts no refund, the use of the books is not restricted to the building of the borrowing library, trivial or inexpensive books are sometimes lent and proof is not always insisted upon that the books sent are not available locally, few questions are ever asked as to "enlarging the boundaries of knowledge." In this second sort of inter-library loan the idea appears to be to encourage rather than restrict the practice.

In both plans it has been found that the two objections oftenest urged against inter-library lending, i.e., loss in transit and call for the book while it is gone, in practice are much less frequent than was first expected. A larger use of the photostat goes far toward annulling these objections.

It is also unquestionably true that many borrowing libraries are careless in their specifications, thoughtless in their requests, and do not usually (as would be well) list the libraries already asked, or state that all likely nearby libraries have been tried. Many borrowing libraries, too, are careless about bibliographic data. Every library that makes many inter-library loans will testify to the inexcusable number of faulty and careless citations, particularly with reference to periodicals. Reference workers should have so strong a sense of gratitude and obligation towards the relatively few libraries that necessarily bear the brunt of inter-library lending as to take the utmost pains to have all requests clear and correct.

Despite a not wholly satisfactory status, inter-library loans are increasing and offer through both varieties a very substantial addition to the reference facilities of any library.

**2. Union lists of periodicals.** "A union list of periodicals is a catalog, usually in alphabetical title arrangement, of the periodicals to be found in the libraries in a special region, with indication of the libraries containing any given title. There are two types of such lists, (1) lists of periodicals currently received, (2) lists of sets with exact indication of what portion of each set is in the libraries listed. The second type is more useful. Such lists are of great reference importance since they often show where a library can find a periodical or volume not in its own collections. The principal use of such lists is for reference and inter-library loan purposes, but they are often useful also as catalogers' aids."[1]

Much the most ambitious and useful project of this kind ever carried out is the *Union list of serials, 1927*.[2] It lists about 75,000 titles chosen from 230,000 available for consideration, and will indicate the holdings of each title by 225 of the principal American libraries. A cooperative card supplement is maintained at the Library of Congress.

Mudge,[3] pages 22–24, lists all notable examples, and on pages 25–26 notes Brigham, C. S., *Bibliography of American newspapers,* which serves as a union list in that field to 1820.

The "union list" plan may readily be used in well defined or restricted fields, e.g., incunabula, with books as well as periodicals, as is shown by the collective catalog of books on railway economics in fourteen American libraries, published in 1912 by the Bureau of Railway Economics.

A useful example of a "near" union list is the list of periodicals abstracted by *Chemical Abstracts,* 1926. This list notes the libraries which regularly receive each journal (but does not state exact holdings), which libraries are willing to lend volumes or numbers of it, and which libraries have facilities for making photostat or other reproductions. No argument is required to show how useful this list will be to chemists

[1] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929. p. 22.
[2] Published by H. W. Wilson Co., New York.
[3] Mudge, op. cit.

working in libraries or laboratories, and how it will make for the least travel and expense in connecting journals and readers.

**3. Repertories.** Possibly this group is better known by the terms "union catalogs" or "universal catalogs." There is reason to think that the word "repertory" in this precise sense is still strange to library usage in this country. It is far from unknown, however. The term is fast growing into a larger international use and its meaning is so exactly what is here described that it seems well to use it to describe a card catalog of books in more than one library—there may be two or twenty. It is assumed, too, that each card, which will of course be a printed card, will by some letter or sign indicate the location of the book. This is not always the case, for the repertory of the Institut International de Bibliographie at Brussels, reputed to be the biggest card catalog in the world, containing over twelve million cards, records merely titles with no consistent location or library data.

The repertory was practically non-existent in this country before the Library of Congress began printing catalog cards. The offer of complete sets of L. C. cards to numerous depository libraries, followed by the printed card activities of a number of other libraries, suggested the usefulness of filing all these cards in one alphabet. In 1912 eighteen American libraries reported[1] such universal catalogs, included in one or another of which were eight series of domestic and five series of foreign printed cards. Any such catalog based on a set of L. C. cards (as most of them are) must now number at least half a million cards, and if it contains all series of printed cards that have been issued during the past twenty-five years, it might easily run to a million.

*Library uses.* While the repertory is only an author list, its values are varied and undoubted.

(1) To the reference department:
Locating books in other libraries or desired on inter-library loan
Identifying books incorrectly cited or described
Making lists of an author's works

[1] Union catalogs and repertories. Library Journal 37:491–97, September, 1912; 37:539–47, October, 1912.

Obtaining all sorts of bibliographic data
(2) To the catalog department:
Determining full and correct author entries
For biographical data about authors
Ordering L. C. or other printed cards
Determining complete sets
Obtaining miscellaneous bibliographical information
(3) To the order department:
Obtaining data needed in ordering books
Comparing and identifying copies and editions

*Cost.* In 1912 about half of the libraries reporting universal catalogs were definite, and sometimes emphatic, that they were worth all they cost. The others were open-minded but waiting demonstration of their use and value. No library had then given up a repertory after a start. It is unquestionably most useful in a large university or reference library. But it is very costly, requiring in equipment one drawer for every 1,200 or 1,500 cards in space; in labor, almost or quite the full time of one assistant—at least $1,500 or $1,800 a year.

**4. Lists of special collections.** Knowledge of the existence or availability of special collections, not alone in libraries but in private hands, is of the utmost importance for the reference worker. Such information is useful in any form, but the more of it that can be brought together and organized or indexed, the more helpful it becomes. There is great need for a recent list of such collections. Johnston and Mudge, *Special collections in libraries in the United States,* 1912[1] is out of date. Such a list should be carefully revised at least every ten years, and some criterion formulated as to what really is a special collection. The latest such list is in the *American library directory supplement, 1928.*[2]

*Private book collectors in the U. S., 1928,*[2] of which three editions at least have been published, is helpful but not as carefully compiled and edited as would be well. Its most useful reference feature is the subject index. The Special Libraries Association's occasional directory of such libraries is helpful in locating special collections.

[1] Johnston, W. D., and Mudge, I. G. Special collections in libraries in the United States. U. S. Bureau of Education Bulletin, 1912, No. 23.
[2] Published by R. R. Bowker Co., New York.

Every reference department will know or have record of the important collections in its city or vicinity. Much rare material, especially manuscripts and first editions, is in private libraries which the owners usually are willing to make available to properly accredited students. The owners and locations of private libraries change rapidly, however. They are sold at auction or en bloc, owners die or discontinue collecting; happily some private collections find their way into public libraries. These constant changes affect adversely the reference accessibility of such books. Even an annual edition of *Private book collectors* could scarcely be strictly accurate or complete.

**5. Library of Congress.** The exceptional facilities and the constant and cordial disposition of the national library to further all library work offer to every library in the country numerous and very practical helpful possibilities for either utilizing the Library of Congress at first hand or benefiting indirectly from its work. In no department, save perhaps in cataloging, are these more notable than in reference work. The chief of them are:

(1) Availability at moderate cost of current "proof sheets" of Library of Congress printed catalog cards in selected subjects. These are useful in following recent publications and for clipping and mounting in making card bibliographies
(2) Printed catalog cards in selected subjects purchasable at small cost, useful in forming card bibliographies or special catalogs
(3) Bibliographies and reference lists on current subjects which may be bought at cost prices, borrowed for copying, or bought in typed form from the Public Affairs Information Service
(4) Free bibliographic correspondence service
(5) Inter-library loans

The library will send on application circulars giving particulars as to any of these services.

**6. Information services.** Several hundred of these commercial projects for the collecting, digesting, and prompt (often daily) furnishing of current information to subscribers have sprung up in the last few years. A few date back a generation or two. They are chiefly in the fields of finance and investment, business, legislation, and public affairs. They

are more used by individuals and business houses than by libraries, although the latter use is growing. Special libraries use them more than any other type, but where there is no special public business library there is a demand upon the public library. They are so expensive as to be beyond the means of most libraries, and the material received, while valuable at the moment, is soon out of date and adds little to the enduring substance of the library. Their service, usually for profit, is reported as uneven, often unsatisfactory—in some cases not worth the cost, at least from the library point of view. It is possible for libraries to subscribe to only a part of some services. The best of them are undoubtedly well done and valuable to their special constituencies, but distinctly less so to libraries. Exceptions to the last stricture are the *Bulletin of the Public Affairs Information Service* (P.A.I.S.) so useful to many libraries, and the engineering card index service started in January, 1928, at 29 West 39th Street, New York City.

Seventy-five such "services" are described in *A.L.A. Bulletin,* July, 1921,[1] but no estimate of their value to libraries is attempted. The Special Libraries Association in 1924 compiled a *Handbook of commercial information services* which noted about eight hundred. This is supplemented by *Commercial services* compiled in 1927 by the research department of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Chicago. A short list of the best "services" with brief discussion of their reference value to libraries by Ethel Cleland is in *Library Journal,* April 15, 1925.[2]

**7. Photostat.** No machine applicable to library service has ever sprung into so wide a use or offered such significant possibilities as the photostat. Like the universal catalog, it is useful to several library departments.

At a cost little more than transportation charges on the books used, a map, a plate, a page, an entire book, a poem, an article, a manuscript, a picture, a newspaper can be furnished

[1] Brigham, H. O. Information services. In A.L.A. Bulletin 15:206–24. July, 1921.

[2] Cleland, Ethel. Reference sources for business use. Library Journal 50:342–43. April 15, 1925.

as quickly as the book can be sent. This saves wear and tear on the book, keeps it at home and often saves copying or reproduction which would be done by the borrower. It brings absolute accuracy into the hitherto dubious and difficult business of copying or reproducing. It permits a degree of enlargement or reduction in the copies, is easy to operate, and a photostat carries an atmosphere of authenticity. There is no lack of testimony to its value in reference work, but there may well be cited a most impressive statement of it by W. T. and M. K. Swingle, "The utilization of photographic methods in library research work."[1] A similar machine, the cameragraph, prints on both sides of the sheet, thus reducing cost, but its work is not so clear as the photostat copy. A larger use of such machines may serve to check somewhat the soaring prices on rare books or at least to make it possible for libraries to have such copies as will be serviceable in research and will reduce the risk of loss which always accompanies an inter-library loan.

**8. One great library.** The word "coordination" first appears in library literature in 1909 in the title of President C. H. Gould's address[2] at the Bretton Woods conference of the American Library Association. It is there defined as "method in cooperation." The thing itself, or a phase of it, was entertainingly and forcefully discussed, also before the American Library Association, by Charles W. Eliot,[3] in 1902. President Eliot's admittedly cogent presentation was then and has since been increasingly regarded as more theoretical (not to say fanciful) than practical. Mr. Gould's new presentation of the idea, while suggestive, has also been regarded rather as the statement of an ideal. Indeed, he himself called it a dream. Certainly little, almost nothing, has been since done to realize it. In both of these discussions the topic was of special interest to reference libraries and librarians. It had to do with separating library collections into the quick and

[1] Swingle, W. T., and M. K. The utilization of photographic methods in library research work. In A.L.A. Bulletin 10:194–99, 423–27 (discussion), July, 1916.
[2] Gould, C. H. Coordination, or method in cooperation. Library Journal 34:335–40. August, 1909.
[3] Eliot, C. W. The division of a library into books in use and books not in use, with different storage methods for the two classes of books. Library Journal 27:c51–56. July, 1902.

the dead, and storing the latter, books thought to be in very infrequent request, in a joint collection of like books from many libraries. The difficulty, the dream, the theory, lay in how infallibly to know the quick from the dead.

Libraries are still growing fast, the pressure on existing buildings is no less; most colleges are scrapping, or would like to scrap, their library buildings about every generation. The problem stated by President Eliot, while perhaps a bit overstated, is still an admitted problem. There is a germ of sound practical counsel in his radical solution. If donors and civic pride were not so fond of bricks and mortar, it is likely that the matter would today be well on toward solution on the basis proposed. Certain it is that the twenty-five years since President Eliot's stimulating paper have witnessed a volume and breadth of substantial "systematic cooperation" between libraries which abundantly attests the vitality and fruitfulness of the seeds he dropped. No more impressive single instance can be cited than the new *Union list of serials*. The appearance of this list has stimulated a form of inter-library cooperation not exactly new but in need of revival, viz., such an exchange or transfer of library holdings as shall tend to consolidate scattered numbers and volumes of sets in fewer libraries. In some cities, notably Chicago, this wholesome result is achieved at the initial purchase by an inter-library agreement in set terms limiting important purchases by each library to fields mutually apportioned.

Much good work towards closer library coordination has been done at different times by committees of the American Library Association; and all meetings of librarians, especially group meetings of those from the same kinds of libraries, are informally effective in the same direction.

Perhaps the solution will lie in more coordinating bibliographic work of this sort, rather than in creating and organizing storage or regional libraries with the attendant laborious physical moving of hundreds of thousands of books. Multiply by ten or one hundred the reach and variety of the kinds of coordination here described and one measurably approaches the conception, indeed the actuality, of one great library, not

in *esse* but in *posse,* formed from all libraries when they shall be more closely knit together for purposes of study and scholarship by common records and catalogs. Such a service has at its command today amazing facilities for communication and for quick transportation of either readers or books (it may be best for both that books should travel less and readers more), in the new quick processes for printing, copying, duplication and reproduction, in the telephone, the telegraph, airships, good roads, cheap postage, and libraries growing not alone in volumes and efficient organization, but, more potently than all, in the increasing competence and vision of better educated and more broadly trained librarians, who shall more and more come to see how much greater the whole can be made than the mere sum of its parts.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library of Congress and its activities. 1926.

## Thought Questions

1. What arguments might be urged, and by what types of libraries, against the extension of inter-library loans?
2. What sources of information outside his own library should a reference librarian know?
3. Make a list of the opportunities for inter-library loan open to any public library with which you are familiar. To what extent does this library make use of such opportunities to develop the reference service?
4. What policies in regard to lending books by inter-library loan would you adopt for a:
   (a) Medium public library
   (b) University library
   (c) Special library

5. By what means other than by lending books can large libraries help small libraries? Which of these seems to be most significant? Why?
6. As reference librarian in a new position, what means would you use to learn the available sources of information in the community?
7. If possible, examine a repertory. What libraries are represented? How is it filed? Do you find any unique features worthy of note? Would you include in it copies of cards for books in its own library, not otherwise represented?
8. What kinds of books would you feel justified in borrowing from other libraries if you were reference librarian in:
   (a) Large public library
   (b) College library
   (c) Small public library
9. List several ways by which libraries of one community can co-operate in reference service. State possible advantages and disadvantages in connection with each.
10. How do good roads, fast mails, telegraph, telephone, parcel post and aviation affect library reference collections and work?
11. In how many different subjects can you cite a union list of periodicals?
12. Give all arguments you can *for* and *against* a Library of Congress depository catalog in a college library of 75,000 volumes.
13. In what types of libraries, and for what specific purposes, would you think a photostat worth $500?

# PART II

## Methods. *The Use of Print*

# Chapter 6

## HANDLING REFERENCE QUESTIONS

1. The inquirer
2. Meeting the public
3. Mind-reading
4. Cross-examination
5. Envisaging the question
6. The approaches to a question
7. Methods of work—first steps
8. Weighing the evidence. Sources
9. Fitting material to readers
10. Overdoing
11. Following through
12. Recording results
13. Going outside the library

In this chapter the effort is made to present a detailed, step-by-step account of the way reference questions present themselves, are studied and answered. It is quite understood and appreciated that no such statement of reference procedure can be made to fit every or perhaps any single question. The steps suggested will vary in number, order, and kind, with both questions and readers. A cut and dried routine, in so vast and varied a field, while it can never be a rule of thumb, least of all inflexible, yet is a good thing to have formulated and before the eyes or convenient to the hand of every reference worker. This is particularly true with library students and new or young assistants.

When set down in print, the procedure gone through in handling a question seems rather long drawn out. Probably no experienced reference worker ever stops to think whether he has taken all the steps described. All of them *are* taken, however, first and last, and it seems well to record and describe them. It should be added that speed is a very essential element in reference work, and the student of these pages must not get the impression of apparent deliberation over each question and questioner.

The simple fact-finding questions, when clear and specific, do not greatly concern this chapter. They are fully treated in Chapter 7.[1]

[1] See page 116 ff.

A reference question completely and satisfactorily answered involves three factors: inquirer, reference librarian, sources or materials. Until the inquirer is connected with the sources or the materials, the work is unfinished, the circuit incomplete.

**1. The inquirer.** Library constituencies are very diverse: in school and college libraries, fixed, limited, studious (at least in library relations), with definite programs and aims; in special libraries, relatively small, homogeneous, precise, and intensive in demands; in public libraries, all sorts and conditions of men, women, and children, a seething democracy with the widest possible range of education, information, curiosity—a most vivid, challenging, and rewarding clientele. They are alike, however, in one thing at least: the majority of mankind, even students, require help and frequently advice in the reference use of a library. They may not always know it, or admit it, but it is true. Nor do librarians quite understand why so many really curious persons, with fairly fixed notions of what they want and why, become suddenly abashed and dumb in the presence of many books in a public library. This indubitable phenomenon is probably truer of public library inquirers than of students in colleges and schools (save perhaps freshmen in their early weeks), many of whom are too familiar and too much at home. But it is true enough of all reference room visitors to constitute a perfectly definite and well recognized type calling for the utmost consideration, sympathy and, not infrequently, ingenuity, if it is to be fully and successfully served. Perhaps visitors feel that their needs or questions will seem not important. Perhaps they are timid about approaching trim and competent-looking public officials. Often they are ignorant or genuinely groping after something but dimly apprehended, all of which does not help to put them at their ease. Such persons are relatively few in number, but they need, and almost always get, a disproportionate share of solicitude and courteous attention.

Miss Bacon[1] divides the world of inquirers into three

[1] Bacon, Corinne. Reference work from the librarian's point of view. Library Journal 27:927–32. November, 1902.

classes: "(1) The select few who know just what they want, state their want with clearness, and expect you to meet it; (2) the people who expect nothing of you, apologize for disturbing you, and break out into a fever of gratitude over the slightest assistance . . . (3) the people who expect you to do all their work for them." Are not these all minority groups? The first group is admittedly small. The second and third we should hope, and indeed expect, to be small. Isn't there a fourth group larger than any, or perhaps than all, of the others: the ordinary, earnest, reasonable inquirers who form the bulk of the reference clientele? The remainder of the article quoted is commended for a detailed and entertaining picture of the day's work of the reference librarian with this public.

**2. Meeting the public.** These three kinds of people, and a surprising number of others, must be met with all the potential significance attaching to "first impressions." The surface qualities necessary to do this are very like those possessed by the ideal railway ticket seller or hotel clerk, with the very considerable additional imputation of omniscience. It is hopeless to set down such exalted attributes in cold type, but at least a few aphorisms may help to make clear the consensus of librarians as to these important first encounters.

"The public is always right." Adapted from George C. Boldt at the Waldorf-Astoria, and from John Wanamaker, the agreement to this motto surely sets no higher ideal of patience and courtesy than librarians should exemplify. While the motto is not literally true, it suggests the spirit and manner in which a visitor should be met. Friendliness, unfailing courtesy, and open-mindedness should be preserved even toward those who lack these qualities. When a reader is wrong, as sometimes happens, he should be set right in a way that will preserve his self-respect; if possible, he should be led to discover his mistake for himself.

Never appear annoyed or indifferent
Never look or seem too busy to be interrupted
Meet all comers more than half way
Meet the public as you would like to be met in a strange library

Never be patronizing or openly amused. Laugh *with* a person, but not *at* him
Never say "Never heard of such a thing" in a way that might offend

And then the "hostess" manner, having achieved a cordial welcome, will imperceptibly shade into the real business of the meeting. There must be in evidence the reassuring psychology of a sympathetic manner, personally and more than casually intent upon and interested in the matter in hand. This will find expression in the hopeful "I think we can surely find something for you" rather than "I'm afraid there isn't much good material on that subject," or even, "Well, let's see what we can find."

There will be readers who both know and show that they know, who indeed not infrequently do know more about their subject than any of the library staff, but the certainty that he knows more than they about the library resources, its tools and facilities, should lend the reference librarian an assurance, a confidence, which will surely never be officious or over-weening. When a reader asks for something so abstruse or technical that the reference worker knows not even the meaning of the word, let him slip quickly around the corner to the dictionary, or, grown older, or hardened to owning lack of omniscience, let him frankly ask his inquirer, How should we go to work to look for that? or, What does that classify under? or, baldly, What does that mean? The inquirer will respect his frankness, be pleased to share his own knowledge, and much time will be saved.

All this discussion relates to those inquirers who boldly find their way to the reference desk. Library opinion and practice seem delicately balanced as to the niceties and proprieties of accosting those other shy or self-sufficient persons who either flutter vaguely about in the offing or who go straight to catalog, shelves, or vertical files with an air of long having been initiated into the mysteries. Some reference workers appear to regard both these with equal suspicion for having ignored the authentic approach to the temple and as equally certain to come to grief. The best maxim in such cases is "Offer help unless sure it is not required or

desired." Let no doubting Thomas ask for sure signs that it is not required. The practiced reference librarian will infallibly detect them even in the proud and confident person who fearlessly tackles the card catalog. As his operations slow down, assurance disappears, a vague uncertain look steals into the face, the watcher will shortly recognize the psychologic moment to intervene with "Are you finding what you want?" And if there should be doubtful cases, risk the asking.[1]

DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK

THE FIRST DUTY and the greatest pleasure of the library assistants is to help people find what they want. Not infrequently readers with a question to ask, apologize to the assistant for "disturbing" her. They need not; she is there to answer questions, and is eager to aid in every possible way. Of course much work besides waiting on the public must be done in the reference and other departments, but it is always secondary to readers' needs.

Because you see an assistant busy at her desk, do not think she must not be interrupted, or will not be glad to be. And it is better to ask questions of the regular attendants than of the boys and girls who put away books—the latter cannot be familiar with the library's resources.

Above all, do not go away unsatisfied. The catalog will be helpful to those who prefer to serve themselves. But if you do not find the information desired, in a large proportion of cases it can be unearthed if you only make your wants known. There are many indexes, reference books, and other tools familiar to librarians that may be used in finding facts which seem almost inaccessible.

DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK

There will be the palpably fumbling, hesitant, groping, rather pitiful individual (too timid to be yet an inquirer) to whom the librarian will go at once, with "May I help you find something?" or, "Is someone waiting on you?" all marked with a consideration so perfect that it flinches not nor flutters when met with a halting apologetic request for "The Wreck of the Hesperus" by Shakespeare, or for a picture of the Church of England.

[1] The sign reproduced on this page, framed and displayed at the reference desks of at least two American libraries, has encouraged more than one reader to make his wants known.

If all this sounds a bit over-refined and as though there might be a "contact technique" for every variety of library visitor, a prompt disclaimer is in order. The above instances do emphasize the prime importance of first contacts. They could as properly be treated with psychologic minuteness as similar contacts in salesmanship or welfare work. This will not be attempted here. It is hoped that the examples cited, the statements made, the conditions described, will combine to make graphic the need for a reference staff that knows and loves both books and people, a staff that exemplifies the friendly traits of naturalness, breeding, intuitive courtesy, and a zeal for personal service.

3. **Mind-reading.** "You see they will choke to death and die with the secret in them rather than tell you what they want," are the startling words with which Mr. E. V. Wilcox[1] opens a lively account of the day's work of a reference librarian, especially as he tried to get his visitors to be clear and specific. It is a familiar situation. Librarians have always marveled mightily at the invincible inarticulateness of inquirers. Mysterious but very genuine is the reluctance or inability of an appreciable proportion of library visitors to reduce their wants to lowest terms. Mr. Wilcox continues: "The chief art of the reference librarian is the knack of divining what the inquirer really wants. . . . Often they begin miles away, in the farthest distance and edge stealthily toward the goal by almost imperceptible degrees. . . . How inconceivably strange this vagueness is! Suppose, for example, that the customers in department stores made requests for 'a bit of merchandise' or 'some dry goods' or asked to see 'household furniture.'"

These opportunities for divination occur oftenest perhaps in public libraries, with their miscellaneous constituencies. Yet they are surprisingly frequent in college libraries, or in reference libraries in special subjects where visitors might be supposed to have fairly clear and definite ideas of what they want when they go to a library.

The reader who knows and can tell what he wants forms an

[1] Why do we have librarians? Harvard Graduates Magazine 30:477–91, June, 1922.

encouraging proportion. He is a joy to serve or to show how to serve himself.

The reader who does not know is almost incredibly numerous, generally honest and earnest, and worth working for and with.

It is the reader who knows and won't tell, or who feels and doesn't know how to tell, who calls for mental treatment.

The aim of library mind-reading, then, is to know how to give people what they do not know they want! Which brings us to the next topic.

**4. Cross-examination.** This term is, of course, too formal and forbidding to be taken literally, but it serves to indicate a distinct process of interrogation or elucidation which very often becomes necessary even after the inquirer has finished his statement of what he is trying to find. This questioning must discover not alone exactly what is desired but how it may be formulated or stated for purposes of search, and what are its antecedents or relations with other subjects—in short, its setting and history. This full and clear understanding is essential to the best service. In addition, it is necessary to know how much material is wanted, whether a concise statement or a wide range of material is desired, whether the treatment is to be trivial, popular, scholarly, or original investigation. And it is often desirable to know when the material is needed (if the reader can not be so directed as to find it himself) and how much time the library may have to work out the matter.

Before questioning a reader, however, it is well to think over for a few moments what he has told. And while he has been telling it the librarian will have been sizing him up profitably and more quickly than the time of writing this sentence.

But if downright cross-examination is unavoidable, let it be neither brusque and abrupt nor too businesslike. It should be marked by questions as few as possible but direct. Get the reader to talking and let him tell all you want if he will. Be receptively inquisitive but be sure the needed information is procured. There have been reference librarians with marvelous scent when once on the trail who lost the chance

to be of the most use because they failed to discover, draw out, or grasp just what was wanted. In some libraries new assistants may not answer the reference telephone because they merely listen and do not ask questions in turn.

There is one thing most helpful to know, most likely to be withheld, bluntly "What is this wanted for?" "What is to be done with it?" Strictly, this is not the library's business, but often it is volunteered, and no item of information is more helpful. If it does not come out otherwise, the query "Do you mind saying what this is for, it will help very much in directing you to the best material?" will not often be resented.

**5. Envisaging the question.** Once questions are finally and clearly stated, they must be examined and studied. There are fact questions, search questions, research questions to be quickly sifted, separated, and assigned for differing treatments.

There are foolish and trivial questions not so easy to determine. A question nearly always is important to the asker and may not be lightly dismissed by the library without the fullest information from him and then not often without explanation. Prize puzzle questions, cross-word puzzles, newspaper contests, word-building contests, and the like, surely have slight claim on personal library service although their devotees are quite entitled to use its books.

Are there unreasonable questions? Librarians are not agreed. Unreasonable requests there indubitably are for service of other sorts, e.g., those requiring time wholly out of proportion to results, or large last-minute requests to be met almost at once; but an unreasonable reference question or bit of research is a delicate and dangerous predication. In fact, the negative quality or instinct that knows surely when a question may not be reasonably answered or worked at, is so rare, so difficult to develop, so easily warped, that some libraries will not admit the existence of an unreasonable question. They try everything to the limit. Now and then there is the question which carries on its face the instant conviction that recourse must be had *ab initio* to other libraries or outside resources.

Then with the question that passes muster as reasonable, sane, meaty, soluble, and offering something to get hold of: isolate the kernel of it, pierce to its core, probe its depths, know it thoroughly. And spend effort generously on the significant, fruitful problem that is worth turning yourself inside out to solve.

**6. The approaches to a question.** When a question is fully before an experienced reference worker there comes to his mind almost instantly an array of possible approaches to it, a number of handles that may be laid hold of in proceeding toward its study or solution. He should be able to decide as quickly which of these are most promising. This is the reference instinct. The library may be asked to find the notes of Thomas Jefferson on the establishment of a United States mint. There are at least four approaches clearly suggested —biographic, subject (United States mint), form (such notes would almost surely have been submitted to Congress or some government department or official and thus become a United States government document), time—pretty definitely fixed. These approaches would seem to be preferred almost instantly in the above order and the inquirer would be referred at once to Jefferson's writings.

Some of these approaches, handles, or clues are:

(a) *Subject.* A question always gives some hint of the field in which it lies. If this is not apparent to or understood by the librarian there is sure to be a word or two which can be referred to dictionary or encyclopedia for enlightenment. If these do not isolate it minutely enough, recourse must be had either to a special encyclopedia in that subject or to the latest handbook or manual where also helpful bibliographies are likely to be found. Some questions fairly bristle with subjects, e.g., Find the Buckingham coat of arms (2 subjects); Statistics on savings banks in Egypt (3 subjects).

(b) *Biographic.* Some subjects, for example, inventions, wars, explorations, institutions, often point or lead to individuals and suggest the need for alertness in recognizing the possible biographic approach which may be hidden in a purely subject question.

(c) *Bibliographic.* The normal approach to almost any question is from the subject side, yet far oftener than is apprehended, words, subjects, or questions yield to first approach from the angle of bibliography. It is true that bibliographies are not cataloged as minutely and completely as subjects, yet there are facilities for keeping track of them which might well be better organized than is usual in great reference libraries. An instance of the quicker bibliographic approach is the location or identification of a minor writing of some author. A bibliography either of the author or of the subject of the paper, if found to exist, would be likely to yield quicker results than consultation of general indexes, catalogs, trade lists, national bibliographies, etc. A case in point is Galton, *Patterns in thumb and finger marks.*

(d) *Time.* Any clue to or intimation of the date or period to which the question refers is of the utmost importance. Time is an essential element in almost every problem. Suppose a reader wants the structural formula of turmeric. With many substances the date, if modern, of quoted authority would not be vital but with turmeric the most hasty search will show its formula to be a controverted question requiring for the right answer the result of the latest research. So does the time factor enter what seems to be a simple subject question.

(e) *Language or nationality.* Place or personal names, the forms of which suggest a foreign source or connection, may furnish useful clues. The seeker should be ever alert for a place connection.

(f) *Form.* To illustrate: How much has been appropriated by Congress for Baltimore harbor? suggests *government documents.* A request for Leech, *Molecular rearrangement of triarylhydroxylamines and ketoximes* spells *dissertations* instantly to the initiated, especially if the card catalog fails to reveal the item.

**7. Methods of work—first steps.** By now the inquirer has been courteously and (when requisite) psychologically met, his mind has been read, and what this mental process did not yield has been extracted from him by cross-examina-

tion, his question has been inspected, and its obvious approaches studied—all in less time than it has taken to describe it.

The first step of actual work upon the question is to discover how much work the inquirer can do upon it for himself. The clever librarian has not gone this far without having acquired some idea as to whether he is the sort of inquirer likely to learn to use the library quickly or at all. If he seems promising he should be

(a) Asked if he is familiar with the card catalog. If not, it should be briefly explained to him or he should be given a printed explanation of it
(b) Asked if he knows the principal periodical indexes, and shown their location in the library
(c) Shown a diagram or floor plan of the reference department
(d) Shown the vertical files and told what they contain. If their use by the public is permitted, he should be shown how to consult them. Usually it is not practicable
(e) Shown the current periodicals
(f) Told about the other reference departments or activities of the library

Even in cases of doubt it may be well to put a reader "on his own" always with the strict but cordial injunction to come back again if any difficulties are met. In such cases the reference assistant will keep half an eye on the reader and be ready with aid at the first distress signal. The tryout will be good for him. Most people rather like to work a system if they can once learn.

If the reader seems helpless, or has fruitlessly exhausted his program of self-help; if the question comes by mail or telephone, or is an urgent matter, it is then squarely up to the librarian to undertake the work. If the reader is personnally present, the question arises—Shall he be taken into partnership? Theoretically this is a good thing to do. It carries the flattering sense of personal attention, it prepares at least one reader to help himself next time, it enables him to pass upon material as found, and if in the joint search with its possible journeys to catalog, shelves, indexes, and files, the reference librarian does not learn still more about the elusive contents of the reader's mind, the latter is at

least fully convinced that no pains are being spared in his behalf. Practically, however, it does not always seem so desirable. Some librarians, when the scent has been picked up, work better alone; the reader quite clearly may be unpromising for either instruction or further information; he may, like the minstrel, be "infirm and old" and not equal to brisk walking, stairs, and elevators; one librarian frankly does not want him "tagging along."

The practice differs with the kind of library. In school and college libraries the librarian always works with the students. Instruction in the use of the library goes hand in hand with the work of the moment. In public libraries, too, more "partnership" work is done with formal students than with others. Reasons are obvious. At any rate, if the inquirer is asked to wait he should be left with a cyclopedia article, a package of clippings, or a pertinent pamphlet clearly announced to him as only a beginning. Don't let him "just wait."

Now we are off. If there are still lingering doubts as to what the question is or means, it should be second nature to resolve them at once with the encyclopedia. Then to the catalog, always the reference worker's chief tool, and, when it has furnished a sheaf of likely titles, in turn (the precise order always depending on both question and questioner) to the stacks, the "R" books, the periodical indexes, bibliographies, government documents, the special vertical file material (first aid with many questions about the world today), the file of previous reference questions with sources.

In this procedure orderly methods of work are of utmost importance. Deliberation, especially at first, will get one farther and faster than undue eagerness, haste or "flopping." Speed will be in order later, when the trail has been struck (and the thrill which marks that moment is unmistakable); yet even then careful going, close observation, and above all accuracy should not be sacrificed to speed. Intelligible notes (even though rough) of differing or conflicting data, of clues picked up on the fly, of titles likely to be needed later, of books consulted, material used, and especially records of the

exact location of all items likely to become parts of the answer or result are imperative accompaniments of the search.

Be always on the alert for clues. They occur not only in footnotes, in variant spellings, in the fuller information in one catalog or bibliography than in another, in the alert associating of facts and ideas, in the promptings of a seasoned reference intuition, but, as every reference librarian knows, in places the most unlikely, unsuspected, unbelievable. A scrap of information acquired but yesterday solves today's problem. Work on today's totally different question brings one head-on against the thing that would have solved yesterday's poser. A most entertaining chapter, uncanny, weird, yet true, on the "Element of luck in reference work" is regretfully deleted at this point.

If the chase is a long one and early results are unsatisfactory, it is quite in order to say so, report procedure and results to date, and suggest or request more time. For reasons detailed in a later paragraph, telephone calls nearly always require more time, but so equally may the questions brought to the librarian in person or by mail. Most inquirers will prefer to wait for the best results if they feel sure that their requests will be followed up faithfully and promptly.

**8. Weighing the evidence. Sources.** In reference work a "source" is any place from which information may be got. Usually this is books, though it may be persons, organizations, letters, documents, or newspapers near or remote. In most libraries more heed is paid to the careful first choice of its books than to the weighing of them as material selected for answering single reference questions. The verdict of the reference librarian in the selection of books for purchase is far more likely to be affected by arrangement, typography, timeliness, indexes, bibliographies, up-to-dateness, than by those qualities which the historical student considers in determining the credibility of narrative or print or archive. Some attention, to be sure, is given by libraries to the authority and reputation of authors, to the integrity and special lines of publishers, and to accuracy, but these points, too, figure more in purchase than in use. Indeed, there is material for a strong

argument that it is not the business of the library to judge of the absolute or relative credibility or impartiality of evidence when spreading its wares before students. It may well be urged that its business is to have the books on both sides of all subjects (this is conceded by librarians), to have them ready for quick use, and to have a personnel that shall delight to lay them before readers who will themselves weigh the evidence and decide questions of credibility and original source. This argument would be quite convincing if every reader did all his own reference work. Today the librarians do most of it and they will always do enough of it to suggest or require (for thoroughly good service) that they pay increasing regard to the credibility and character of the materials that they proffer. In this respect it is likely that the quality of reference work in this country today falls below the spirit in which it is performed.

Not all books in any library are thoroughly or equally reliable. This fact carries in its train countless opportunities to discriminate among them, to develop and use a sense of the best evidence, to know for what kinds of work it is imperative to get original source material, to appreciate that for the thousand and one questions that make up the day's work secondary sources will suffice, and to know that there is choice even among secondary authorities. To illustrate: a request is made, originating with the governor of a British Caribbean colony, for information as to whether any instance exists in American colonial history where the speaker of either house withheld, either temporarily or permanently, from the governor's assent a bill which had passed both houses. A contemporary account by a royal governor of one of the American colonies, while it might furnish a helpful clue, could no more be considered definitive than could similar testimony from the leader of a colonial assembly which had notoriously encroached upon the executive at every turn. The best evidence available to librarians (generally restricted to printed books) would be such official journals of colonial legislatures, papers of colonial governors, letters between contemporary public men as have been printed, or as secondary source the

careful monograph of a disinterested modern scholar written after full study of all available material. Assuredly a reference librarian has as much need as a historian or a lawyer for a course in the credibility of evidence.

The comparative value and authority of anonymous versus signed books and articles; of new encyclopedias and dictionaries versus those that have been carried through several editions by a talented staff; of the pronouncements of ably edited, impartial journals when compared with those of journals edited by a church, political party, or big business—these are examples of the simpler criteria which invite judgment and discrimination.

9. **Fitting material to readers.** Sloane's *Napoleon* may be the best biography in English, but the fourth best (or worst) for the inquiry of the moment.

Material on soils for John Jones, farmer, is almost certain to be quite different from that desired by John Jones, chemist.

"Something on radio" for a club paper would only excite the derision of the graduate student writing on "Remote control."

These examples should show what is meant by the title of this section. To suggest material far beyond the comprehension of an inquirer is quite as bad as to give elementary material to a Darwin or an Edison.

Irrelevant material should never be offered, and if the reference librarian after mind-reading and cross-examination is still unable to recognize it as such, he would appear to have missed his calling.

The personal acquaintance which librarians come to have with many regular visitors and the resulting knowledge of their interests, work, and abilities, are of great help in selecting the most appropriate material.

Another odd trait of the public is to distrust what it can not see. The librarian may know, offhand, to a foot the height of Everest, to a yard the polar axis of the earth, to a fraction of a carat the weight of the Kohinoor, to a dollar the amount of the national debt, but if he fails to produce something (anything, it would seem) in print to support and

confirm his statements, he will have made an unsatisfied client, perhaps lost one wholly.

On the other hand, no reference librarian, not even the occasional mnemonic marvel, should habitually essay offhand unchecked answers. They will sometimes be wrong and such practice is slap-dash reference work.

**10. Overdoing.** By this term is meant overwhelming a reader with material far beyond his need, not knowing when to stop, bringing more and ever more when a single book or article would have been enough. Another form of overdoing is over-tenacity (a fine trait when rationally used), going on and on in hopeless search when plan, clues, and prospect have long since vanished. Another form is preparing lists of books that are too long, too highbrow, or which otherwise miss the mark, from not having learned or grasped or remembered what the mark was. No fault is commoner, and, awkwardly, the very impulse which prompts it is a trait that is hard to censure. Yet thousands of hours are wasted annually by reference librarians who do not know where to stop.

**11. Following through.** "Following through" is as important in the reference room as on the tennis court or golf links. The librarian will keep an eye on those who have been freshly introduced to catalog, indexes, and shelf arrangement. Often a half-dozen readers will be on his hands or mind and under observation at the same time. He will interrupt as little as possible, will add a book here, a particularly pertinent magazine there, say to one, "Are you finding what you want?" to another (but not unless there are signs of distress), "Is there anything else you would like to see?" to a third, "Here is the book that could not be found yesterday." The uncertain, groping readers will need more such attention than those quite apparently able to serve themselves. Many will be much better if let alone.

Then there is the farewell chat. The librarian should be sure, even to the point of asking, that the visitor goes away satisfied. There are many arrows in the library quiver. (1) Further search may be made and the results written or

telephoned. (2) The books not available today may be reserved and the reader notified. (3) Helpful material may be procured from another department of the library. (4) If results are quite discouraging the librarian will go to some pains to explain the ground covered, the methods employed, in an effort to make the visitor feel that everything possible has been done. (5) As a last resort, especially in cases where the search or subject seems thoroughly worth while and results more elusive or meager than they should be, the visitor may well be referred to the head of the department, or to the librarian, who usually knows the library better, who is responsible in the end, and who usually initiates the effort to get books from other libraries or to buy new ones. Some department heads, indeed, require such reference. (6) An effective and much appreciated follow-up is to remember inquirers and their interests and to notify them when books likely to interest them are received. A special card record of such individuals and interests is kept in many libraries.

**12. Recording results.** Many libraries keep regular records of reference work done, just as the circulation department is careful to keep its record of loans. It is specially important to note questions on which satisfactory material was not found. This record is:

For statistics and reports
For use in filling gaps in library resources
For future consultation—to keep available good work once done
For publicity material, newspaper stories (of course, without names or identifying facts)

A well known reference librarian comments thus on the last item:

"We have requests occasionally from newspaper reporters for articles about the funny questions people ask. We do not of course furnish this information, out of consideration for the readers who have asked them and for those who might in the future be deterred from asking questions. Reference publicity in a general way we welcome."

These records often are rather informal, though they must be clear and neat; they are usually kept at the principal reference desk, but of course are equally available to every member of the staff. They are stated above in what seems

to be the order of their importance, and some of them are more fully described below.

(a) *Records of questions.* Questions that are answered while the inquirer waits usually are merely counted, though any unusual facts or sources brought to light are immediately noted in the Fugitive-facts file.

Questions which are telephoned in, received in the mail, or on which more time is asked, are much more fully recorded. For all such are noted the name, address, and telephone number of inquirer, the time he will call, the place to which material is to be sent, the question itself clearly stated, the use to be made of the material, especially the name of the assistant first handling the question—in short, all that is or would be learned in interview. In addition, there should be added such notes as to sources consulted, books used, results attained, as will enable that member of the staff who is on duty when the same person next calls or telephones or sends a messenger, to know the history of the case. Some libraries use standard cards printed with all items desired and filled out for all questions that are not answered immediately. A few use a blank book, a sort of journal or diary, for this follow-up record. This has certain advantages of permanence and stability over cards.

(b) *Fugitive-facts file.* This is an alphabetic subject file on cards, of unusual, out-of-the-way, or specially difficult information furnished and which seems likely to be again in request. No effort is made to index all questions answered, but questions which have failed of answer are worth recording with full record of search and findings. No data are recorded beyond the fact, sources, and date.[1]

(c) *Statistics.* Many, perhaps most, libraries (if indeed any record is kept) are content with merely the number of questions asked and answered, with an occasional entry for an unusual question.

In recording results for library records, and particularly in preparing bibliographies and notes for readers, a simple, clear,

[1] A full account of this record is in Wisconsin Library Bulletin 15:118–20. May, 1919.

standard form should be used. It should be *full enough* to save future work when it is used—e.g., Wright, *English dialect dictionary,* is scarcely sufficient; there are dozens of Wrights in every catalog. References should be noted with sufficient fullness to identify them easily. Brief notes as to the value or valuelessness of certain items for the particular purpose are always helpful. And all such record work should be neat and thoroughly intelligible to new assistants who will follow.

**13. Going outside the library.** The wide-awake librarian will never forget, when the resources of the home library are exhausted, the possibilities outside the library, city, or even state. These auxiliary resources, the use of which is fully described in Chapter 5,[1] are more numerous, better organized, and more easily availed of, with every year. Few libraries keep a formal list of "Sponsors for knowledge" but many libraries turn to individuals, authors, publishers, bankers, business men, public officials, for a sort of help that is available nowhere else so readily or at all.

A good motto for the reference librarian is "Somebody knows," and it is often surprising to discover how close at hand that somebody usually is.

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[1] See page 79 ff.

## Thought Questions

1. Should a library be able to conduct a "general information bureau" as effectively as a commercial company organized for the purpose? Why?
2. Recall, if possible, your own experience of receiving conspicuously satisfactory service in a reference department. Analyze this experience to discover the factors which made the contact successful.
3. Have you as a reader ever been dissatisfied with the service in a reference department? In what ways was the reference librarian unsuccessful?
4. Visit a reference department in a neighboring library and observe the service given during the busiest hours of the day. In what ways would you improve the service; the attitude of the reference librarian toward the inquirers?
5. How would you deal with each of the following inquiries:
   (a) I'd like to see a picture of the Tower of Babel.
   (b) Could you make me a list this afternoon of all the books on music and musicians that are in the library? (In a library having a large music collection)
   (c) I want to look up something on history.
   (d) Who was a leader of the Octobrists?
   (e) A professor of Botany asks for a certain monograph on paraheliotropism which is not in the library.
6. What are the essential facts which you would emphasize in explaining the use of the catalog to a reader who has not used one before?
7. Comment on the comparison suggested in section 3 between librarians and ticket sellers and hotel clerks.
8. Characterize the type of material on federal reserve banks that you would give to:
   (a) A graduate student in economics
   (b) A club woman whose knowledge of the subject is vague
   (c) A high school girl who has a general idea of the subject
   Illustrate with titles of a few books, articles, etc., if possible.
9. What record would you keep of reference questions:
   (a) In a public library
   (b) In a college library
   Why?
10. During your practice work, keep a list of the questions asked you, and a record of your way of handling each of them. Later consider whether you might have followed a better procedure with any of the questions? Give your reasons.
11. Have you hit upon any interesting or effective methods of persuading the reader to tell you what he wants? Write a brief account of them.
12. What ways can be suggested for convincing a reader that there are no books on his subject?
13. Name several uses for a file of reference questions.

# Chapter 7

## FACT-FINDING AND MATERIAL-FINDING

1. A community information bureau
2. Fact-finding
3. Material-finding
4. Knowledge of the community
5. Knowledge of library resources
6. Keeping up with current books
7. Character of reference questions
8. Home-made aids

Chapters 7 and 8 will divide all reference work into three parts, which will then be described and analyzed. This division will be based upon the nature of the work, not upon the size, character, and location of libraries. In this great field, comprising all libraries, there may fairly be distinguished three degrees or intensities of reference work: fact-finding, material-finding, and research. These terms must not be taken as a rigid or recognized terminology. They are but convenient names used here to differentiate reference processes. It is believed that each differs enough from the others to make the three terms valid and helpful distinctions. They connote an ascending scale, beginning with the simplest form of reference work and ending with the most involved and important. The definitions in this and the following chapter should make clear precisely what is meant by each term.

**1. A community information bureau.** It is not enough to say that any library properly may try to be a local information bureau. Such service, even to the extent intimated in Dr. Learned's inspiring program,[1] is now recognized as a library obligation of equal force with the circulation of books, the neglect of which would invite reproach. No library is too small to cherish such an aim or too poor to do its utmost to realize it. In small libraries the slender personnel will act unitedly toward this end. In larger and great libraries one

[1] See Chap. 1, p. 10–11.

or more efficient reference departments will usually act as the local clearing house of information. It will bring together facts, new ideas of interest, often of importance, to its constituency, and to an extent which, while sometimes unfortunately limited by the library income, is yet nearly always a surprise to the community it serves.

The desire, not to say demand, for reference service is much greater than is commonly supposed. Wherever alert and informed reference service is offered, a surprising patronage results, which can usually be further stimulated by active publicity. The reference staff acts as a conspectus, index, and guide, not alone to local but to remote resources.

**2. Fact-finding.** This is reference work reduced to its lowest terms. It occurs when the objective is specific, clearly stated, and the answer sought nothing more than a name, date, title, statistic, fact, or figure. It is when the question instantly suggests the right book, and the answer when found is usually in one book, often on one page. It is oftenest statistical, biographical, geographical, or literary, and in nine cases out of ten can be answered from one of the half-dozen most useful quick reference books. It is rapid-fire, catch-as-catch-can, comes very often over the telephone, and often, particularly in large or special libraries, is handled with surprising sureness and speed. If what first appears to be a fact-finding question fails of answer in five minutes at most, it becomes one of material-finding and the scope of the search is broadened.

Much of the fact-finding, especially in the largest libraries, is handled at an information desk,[1] which should be in the most immediately accessible spot in the building. It is likely to be the busiest spot as well. It is primarily to direct visitors promptly and accurately to the different departments and offices of the library, and to answer questions about the library and the city; but it often relieves the reference department of much of this fact-finding. The information desk should, and usually does, take care of all questions that can be

[1] Flexner, J. M. Circulation work in public libraries. A.L.A., 1927. p. 182–84. American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States. A.L.A., 1926. v. 2. p. 104–10.

answered without the attendant's leaving the desk, and from a small but select shelf of books within arm's reach. When more time or more books are required, or when a fact-finder is holding up the procession, it is in order to refer him and his question to the reference department. In some libraries the excellent practice obtains of handing the inquirer a little card of introduction to the reference staff, giving such data as will save it the most time.

There should be a clear understanding as to the character and extent of the reference work done or attempted at the information desk. Reference work is usually coveted by younger staff members, and an ambitious attendant must not so far over-reach himself as either to defeat the purpose of the desk or fail of the best service the library can render to the inquirer. The information assistant should never, for instance, ask for time, an hour or a day, promise to call up later, and thus hold over work which should be cleared up at once. It is amazing what a range and amount of legitimate work can be covered with a very few books by a brisk, competent person who knows them thoroughly and is quick to discover what people want. Every considerable reference department, whether or not a separate information desk is maintained, will have an extensive equipment of fact books, thoroughly up to date. Many libraries keep a small separate collection of such books immediately at hand, thus saving time and steps for both reader and reference staff. Such a collection might well have for its first dozen books *World Almanac, United States statistical abstract, Who's who in America, Statesman's yearbook, American yearbook,* Hoyt's *Practical quotations,* Lippincott's *Biographical dictionary,* Lippincott's *Gazetteer, Practical standard dictionary, Congressional directory,* the legislative manual of the state, and the directory of the city.

With many fact questions it is puzzling to know when and whether to find the answer or to let the inquirer do it. One argument against handling general questions at the information desk is that it appears to advertise the library's willingness to do all such work. The library is indeed willing,

desirous even, to receive these questions and is ready actually to handle them if no one else can; but it runs directly counter to a wholesome principle of self-help, and to the theory that an important part of reference work is teaching the public to serve itself, when the information desk or any other desk sets the pattern of doing all the work. Certainly when there is no public information desk, every question, especially every easy question which the reference librarian is sure can be answered by a specific book, should be so diverted, and the inquirer put "on his own." It may often be proved that it would have been quicker and easier for the librarian to do the work, but if the library clientele is to be trained to even a moderate independence, librarians must effect a compromise with their present eagerness to "do it all." And the best place to begin is with the simplest questions.

Per contra, here is a comment from the field on the danger of letting a reader help himself too much on fact-finding questions.

"The asker of the question covering one isolated fact is frequently not an habitué of the library; this may be his only appearance there. If so, he will be particularly ill at ease with library tools. Even people fairly often in the library, too, may have troubles unanticipated by the librarian. Among them are such things as bad indexing, cross references, selection of a synonym not in the reader's mind, unfamiliar diacritical marks. The inquirer may find no answer, an incomplete answer, or an absurd one, in the book which the librarian knows contains the actual answer. In the reference room we have made it the regular practice not to give 'the best guess' unopened to anybody, unless we have previous knowledge of his ability to find parts of contents of books. A foiled inquirer may leave the library in that condition, or he may insist that the answer is not in the book he has been given. In the latter case it will be awkward for the librarian to show him that it is. And if 'the best guess' happens also to be the only one that she is sure about, she may have a long and quite unnecessary search to find another adequate one."

Many fact-finding questions seem trivial, unreasonable, or impossible. Some of them really are, but fewer than at first appear so. Nearly every question is asked in good faith, and the librarian can never be too tactful and patient in considering and trying to comprehend the situation before deciding, and above all before saying, that nothing can be done. Then, too, aside from the fact that questions which seem trivial may

not be so, there may be real benefit to the reference assistant in following them through, an acquaintance with books and subjects before unknown.

3. **Material-finding.** Not every question which can be answered by a name, date, statistic, or word is a "five-minute" query. Often what looks easy starts a long hunt. Conflicting data appear, comparisons must be made, statements must be traced to sources, and thus the limits of "quick" reference work are passed, and fact-finding becomes material-finding.

Then there is the question which indubitably spells considerable search from its earliest moment, which is no hangover and which is the staple and body of most reference work. And at its farthest bound it is also possible to define and set the limits of such a problem. It is one for which there is a positive answer, which is either found or not found, or one which is so exact and explicit in terms (as debate questions, for example) that no doubt can exist or arise as to the objective of the search. Yet it differs, and sharply, from the fact question in that it does not suggest even the possibility that it can be answered by a single word or figure. Its quest is substance, not shred; extended information; material for study, reading, writing, talking. It differs quite as much from the research problem, as will appear from reading the definition of the latter in Chapter 8.[1]

*Search formulae.* Useful and dependable as are the best standard reference books, there is yet a danger, especially with young librarians, of coming to depend too much upon one or a few books which experience has shown to be unusually comprehensive. Two parts cyclopedia and one part *Readers' Guide,* or two parts *Britannica* and one part *Statesman's yearbook,* may prove effective prescriptions wherever used, that is, they will almost always yield something, but whether they should be used in a given case depends much upon the source and character of both question and questioner.

Sometimes, too, especially with questions coming over the telephone, zeal to return an immediate answer interferes with full information about the question or full justice to it. It

[1] See pages 31-32.

is usually best to get all needed information, and to arrange to call the inquirer back. This ensures careful work, and not too hurried answers.

In short, there are no sure "rules" equally applicable to all or even to many questions. Each inquiry is different from every other, if not in set terms then in source, need or implication, and may require for its proper answer very much more or different material from the same question of the day before.

4. **Knowledge of the community,** that is, of the world about him in which he must live and do his work, is one of the chief funds upon which the reference librarian must draw to meet the varied and insistent demands of the day's work. Many, perhaps most, reference questions will have to do with either the immediate community or that greater community, the world outside. The better the librarian knows both and keeps up to date on both, the better his work will be.

There are persons with a palpable flair for community knowledge. They absorb the place-spirit unconsciously, they get its atmosphere with the air they breathe, they somehow always know without ever having consciously learned. They would laugh to scorn a set program for "knowing the community." Such lucky ones may skip this paragraph. To all others it is commended with double emphasis as gospel truth, and its achievement as a *sine qua non* for the best reference or library work. And for the cheer and comfort of those flair-less others, there follows a list of rites, ceremonies, and devices, warranted, if faithfully observed, to prevail against the most self-centered immunity.

Faithfully read at least one local newspaper.

Read any community surveys that have been made: educational, financial, social, religious, industrial.

Read the best history of the place or region. A reference librarian coming from outside should do this at once.

Cultivate people; this is the basis of all community knowledge.

Examine all new books about the city, even the directory, the reports of public officials, the publications of the Chamber of Commerce.

Become acquainted with any dominating institution or industry, especially one from which the city takes its character or color.

Accept most invitations to address local groups. Seek others sometimes.

Belong to some local organizations. The library may well meet the small cost.

Watch the current reference questions. They are the best indexes of the reference demands upon the library. They reveal strong and weak spots in its collections and personnel.

Watch circulation statistics as revealing current interests of reading public.

Have all staff members report to the reference department local items which seem significant.

Keep somewhat in touch with affairs of state and nation as well as city. This usually will be through a metropolitan daily or an able review.

Similarly in a college library it is necessary to know the college, its history and traditions, to study its catalog, to follow closely all college publications, to keep in touch with faculty and student activities and to take part in them when asked.

In a special library, too, an acquaintance with the history, organization, and business of the company should promptly be acquired.

**5. Knowledge of library resources.** To the specious epigram "The librarian who reads is lost" someone has added the truer dictum "The librarian who doesn't read isn't worth finding." It is from reading, the consuming desire to read, and the indulgence of that desire, that a knowledge of books comes. And it is these inciting qualities—bookishness, bookmindedness, book-love—fertilized and enriched by contact with great libraries, that produce a Spofford, an Eames, a Garnett, a Winsor.

It is such men, such qualities, that at any time are most needed in libraries. As interpreters of books, as reference librarians, they are indispensable, imperative. There may be today no place for them as executives. Their type is a relic of the day when a library was nothing but its books. They and their kind *know,* their knowledge grows by what it feeds upon, they assimilate, not merely absorb.

And surely today, more than ever, it is this book knowledge that reference librarians should have. The most promising candidates will be those in whom the taste and capacity

for book knowledge are innate and abundant. In others it must be developed as well as may be. Library schools have done and are doing something at this. They are the sole appreciable sources of supply, but the bulk of the product is not altogether encouraging when matched against those qualities that are or should be fondly cherished as marking the ideal interpreter of books.

Interestingly enough, the modern library mechanism, ingenious and impersonal, however much we deplore it as a substitute for humanism, does in a certain way (and at times to an extent almost startling) atone for those authentic native aptitudes which so seldom appear in the candidates for our library positions. A recent stimulating volume of library essays gives so admirable an illustration of this that it seems necessary to reproduce it here.

"A friend brought me what appeared to be a genuine manuscript letter of the German poet Schiller. It was addressed to his sister, and all in his handwriting. And yet it looked a trifle suspicious. Despite the appearance of age, it had a little the air of a facsimile. But my friend thought it might be an original letter—it had been given to him as a valued possession. Now I am no Schiller scholar . . . I had never heard of Fritz Jonas' celebrated edition of Schiller's correspondence. But I did know where the Schiller books were, and that there was among them a set of volumes of letters. In three minutes I went to the place, found the authoritative-looking set, picked out the year and day of the letter, and discovered a footnote to the effect that someone had caused an admirable facsimile of this letter to be lithographed and that efforts were constantly being made to sell it as an original.

"Now, this incident will bear analysis. It is typical of much that goes on in our service. The query was not simple. But the means of answering it to the entire satisfaction of the inquirer were really primitive. They consisted merely in a knowledge that there was once a German poet named Schiller, that he had a place in our classification, that his books were shelved in a certain part of our stacks, and that, as a rule, editors arrange correspondence in chronological order. I knew no more about German poetry, or Schiller, or Schiller's letters, when the transaction was over than when it began. But my friend, who is a man of much learning and . . . one of our foremost scientists, seems firmly convinced that I can find him anything in German literature which he wishes to know. You see on how slight a foundation of real knowledge one can and does perform his daily duties." [1]

And so, despite wholesome ideals and a backward, yet hopeful, glance at the all too infrequent, perhaps fortuitous, marvel or genius, we face the fact that although it is possible

[1] Bishop, W. W. Backs of books. Williams and Wilkins, 1926. p. 7–8.

for one head to carry up to a hundred thousand book titles, the day is passed when such a mnemonic *tour de force* can best cope with the size, organization, professional machinery, and rich bibliographic equipment of a great modern library. No one head can longer carry all that must be known to interpret, unaided, million-volume libraries, and so methods and machinery are replacing men. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that methods and machinery more and more are *reinforcing* men. The book-man, especially in a single field or subject, is as useful as ever, but besides his books he must know methods and machinery or he fails.

It follows, therefore, that the phrase "knowledge of library resources" means knowing not books alone but equally and intimately the vast, intricate, increasing, and absolutely indispensable apparatus which stands between laity and the utmost usefulness of its libraries.

Literal and precise knowledge by a single person of the resources of a large library (over 100,000 volumes) will almost perforce be limited to acquaintance with its size, its type, and the general field it occupies, its scope (pretty exactly including its weaknesses), the character, extent, and relative renown of its special collections, and at most a few thousand titles of important sets, series, monumental works or rare and expensive items. But if this person has at his back a half-million volumes fully and competently classified and cataloged, and at his elbow a full complement of bibliographies, indexes, catalogs, digests, and if he knows thoroughly well how to make the utmost use of them, he will have a working knowledge of the resources of his library such as not even the most illustrious library phenomenon of other days could remotely approximate.

Divide the half-million books into five equal subject groups to be interpreted separately for specialized constituencies and at once there is again place for the book-specialist or bibliographer but with two significant differences from his older prototype; he must be, for example, lawyer as well as librarian and his book knowledge will be restricted to a single field.[1]

[1] Further discussion of the specialist type of reference librarian occurs in Henry, W. E., Five objectives of a university library. University of Washington, 1927. p. 13–17.

**6. Keeping up with current books.** For years libraries have been started and developed faster than librarians can be trained for them. This inevitably has resulted in many reference librarians with but a slender or pitiful first-hand knowledge of books. There are devices by means of which libraries try to encourage and increase it. Some of them may be mentioned.

The best way to get acquainted with books is to use them.

Another good way is to be obliged to recommend them for purchase; either older books to strengthen different parts of the library or, more difficult, current books in all fields. Selection of the latter may be preceded either by examination of the books or by the systematic reading of the best reviews.

Every reference librarian should take pains to know *all* of the library, not alone the books recognized as the reference collections.

Every head of a special department or collection should know more than a little of general reference work and enough of the resources and current additions of other departments to know when such departments will supplement his own.

Staff rotation increases general book knowledge. Many libraries which excel in reference work feel that no one should work in the reference department who has not worked in other departments.

Staff meetings to discuss new books, usually in consideration for purchase, are helpful in fixing new titles in mind.

In many libraries the reference staff examine all the new books but everywhere efforts are made to see at least the new "R" books. Sometimes all new books are held on special shelves two or three days for staff inspection.

Occasionally some classification and assignment of subject headings are done by the reference staff in cooperation with the catalog department or vice versa. This is good theory in libraries of any size, but seldom works smoothly in practice except in small libraries.

**7. Character of reference questions.** Having now defined and differentiated fact-finding and material-finding and considered somewhat the need for a close acquaintance with

both community and library if these, the two usual forms of reference work, are to be well done, it will be of interest and profit to notice briefly the source and character of the questions that reach the reference departments of American libraries.

In the *Library Journal* for April 15, 1927, Martha Conner[1] classifies by subjects about 25,000 questions recorded during four months of each year over a period of twenty years at the central reference department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Few libraries have so carefully recorded important questions for so long a time. The inferences noted are interesting, and perhaps significant, to college students anticipating library work and seeking the most pertinent preparation for it, and to libraries as a guide to book selection.

The present author's interest in this study just here is in its revelation of the four subjects (or, more properly, broad fields of knowledge) in which most of these questions fall. They are: pure and applied science, 33 per cent; social science, 21 per cent; history, 17 per cent; literature, 11 per cent. Under the direction of Dr. W. W. Charters, the American Library Association Curriculum Study has brought together similar figures from eighteen representative public libraries.[2] Most of them cover but a few months, but they have been carefully kept and classified. They show that the same four subjects claim by far the larger part of all questions—not in precisely the same ratio in all cases, but after making allowances for dominant industries or institutions in different cities, the resulting percentages are surprisingly uniform.

These figures relate to the sort of inquiries which in this chapter are designated as fact-finding and material-finding—inquiries which form the bulk of all library reference work. As intimated above, the questions brought to a library give direction to its book buying, but the reverse of this is equally true as attested by the famous "mouse-trap" quotation. Let a library but buy a substantial, well chosen stock of books on

[1] Conner, Martha. What a reference librarian should know. Library Journal 52:415–18. April 15, 1927.

[2] Charters, W. W. College preparation for reference work. School and Society 27:150–52. February 4, 1928.

any subject which is at all justified by a study of its community; let it keep on buying the standard or important new books in the same field; and the use of these books will surely follow. They will be discovered, read, and borrowed in most rewarding fashion, although there may have been little previous interest in or inquiry for them. This use may be stimulated somewhat by publicity but such books will never stand idle on the shelves.

**8. Home-made aids.** Every good reference librarian, no matter how many or how good his books and bibliographies, no matter how excellent the library catalog, supplements them with personal and informal files and indexes, many of which are too transient, too local or too personal to be incorporated satisfactorily into the vertical file. In some libraries the reference department is altogether too cluttered up with them. They are untidy, not weeded out often enough, not combined as effectively as might be, would be better in a vertical file. Carefully considered, made with care, kept free from dead-wood, freely furnished with guides, they save many situations.

The following list of home-made indexes and files is the result of visits to several dozen representative libraries of different types:

Inter-lingual dictionaries
Directories
Laws—alphabetically by subjects
Christmas index: Carols, plays, trees, stories, etc.
Easter index: Carols
Thanksgiving index: Carols
Short stories: Sea, western, mystery, ghost, etc.
Gift book suggestions: by sex and ages
Fugitive poetry: supplement to Granger
Fiction: by types and subjects
Adult education file: books specially suited for particular uses
Debate index
"Things to be done": "Knitting work"
Local newspapers
Correspondence files: by subjects
Fugitive facts
Biography (chiefly local)
Previous searches
Individuals (available for consultation) and their subjects
Unindexed composite books

Bibliographies
Genealogies
Translators
Tutors
Festschriften
Stenographers
Material in other private and public libraries in vicinity
Current government documents (until printed indexes appear)
Magazines not in periodical indexes
Lists of good pictures; e.g., of flowers by names, of governors

The list above helps to show the kinds of questions, both fact-finding and others, which make up the aggregate recorded by representative public libraries in this country in recent years. One such library, in its reference department, handled 88,115 books during the past year: 57,168 from the 5,486 "R" books segregated in the reference room (an average use of about ten times for each book) and 30,947 books from the stack.

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## Thought Questions

1. How can a patron be made to feel that he has had the best and latest information on his subject?
2. If you were appointed reference librarian in a strange city, how would you proceed to make yourself familiar with the library collection?
3. Would you separate "fact-finding" from "material-finding" in a public library of medium size? If so, where would you allocate it? Why?
4. Demonstrate how you would turn a simple fact-finding question into a lesson in self-help for the benefit of the reader.
5. How would you arrange for the reference staff in a medium public library to keep in touch with:

(a) New books received for all departments
(b) Book review periodicals

6. Visit a library and examine any special files and indexes which the reference department has made. Does their usefulness seem to justify the time and effort expended in keeping them up to date?
7. During your practice work in a reference department, watch to see how often your successful answer to a question depends upon:
   (a) Your knowledge of the library community
   (b) Your knowledge of library resources
   (c) Your acquaintance with current books
   (d) Information you have picked up incidentally
   (e) Pure luck
   Comment briefly on your observation.
8. How would you advertise the resources of the reference department at:
   (a) Local fair
   (b) Teachers' meeting
   (c) Rotary luncheon
9. Explain more exactly the nature of and uses for the lists on the ten subjects which are expressed in one word each in the list in section 8.
10. Can you cite readily available reference books or other sources which seem to provide the material furnished by any of the topical lists named in section 8? If so why are these lists worth making by a single library?

# Chapter 8

## RESEARCH AND THE LIBRARY

1. New demands on libraries
2. Are libraries prepared to meet research demands?
3. Fact-finding versus research
4. The library's rôle in research
5. A library research faculty
6. Library research activities
7. Standard research procedure

**1. New demands on libraries.** There are today thirty thousand men in some five hundred commercial research laboratories in this country who are at work on problems of standardization, serialization, and personnel administration. This is but one segment of an inevitable library clientele. Other groups of research workers will swell the total to an impressive figure. This army of investigators doubtless is largely the product of colleges and universities—the institutions which long have been, perhaps still are, the chief research centers—where its members as students had easy access to books and were trained to use them. Once out of college, however, and no longer part of the immediate and normal constituency of college and university libraries, they look in other directions for the books which are essential to them at every turn.[1] For the first step in research, one which often must be taken before the problem can be definitely stated, is to examine the printed records of all similar work already done. The commercial researchers naturally turn to public libraries, and experience has shown that if existing libraries do not or can not supply the needed books, and especially the needed personal service to make them easily accessible, these indispensable adjuncts will be created by the research laboratories and the commercial concerns themselves. That this has already been widely done is attested by the rapid increase in the number of special libraries, most of

[1] On page 58 of World's Work for February, 1929, there is a striking picture of Charles P. Steinmetz in his research laboratory. The figure of the electrical wizard dominates the sketch but it is mentioned here because books are as numerous as apparatus. They are everywhere: on the table, on the chair, behind the batteries, in the bookcase, on top of the case; twenty-four volumes in all.

which probably never would have been started had existing libraries been able fully to meet these new demands.

**2. Are libraries prepared to meet research demands?** This vivid glimpse of the relatively new and much intensified demands on libraries that are being made and to be made, raises at once the question, Are libraries prepared to meet them? A categorical answer must be "no," but this may in fairness be somewhat qualified. The book collections of American libraries, increasing annually by perhaps three hundred thousand worth while titles, are now reasonably adequate for the conventional sort of research work that, until lately, has been the chief product of our graduate colleges and schools. This has been mainly in pure science and the humanities. It is now becoming vocationalized, commercialized, outside of universities, and is making new and strange demands on libraries.

Most libraries, especially the great ones, do not lack money with which to buy books. It is easier to get ten dollars for books than one dollar for administration. Book resources, however, are imperfectly correlated. It is often impossible to know whether desired material is in any American library. It has but just become possible through the *Union list of serials* to know the location of sets or parts of sets of periodicals in the principal libraries.

But more serious than scanty book stocks and lamentable gaps in great collections or the lack of such union records and bibliographies as will locate existing material promptly, is the personnel which meets the serious student in all but a half-dozen American libraries. It is a personnel sufficiently trained for and usually very effective in meeting most demands that are made on libraries today but clearly inadequate and under-trained when confronted with research problems. It is a personnel readier with manner than with matter, reasonably facile in fact-finding but almost certain to discourage another visit to the library from the true scholar seeking pertinent evidence and testimony rather than the nearest elementary reference books. The few libraries whose reference personnel most nearly approaches a group of scholars or specialists will

probably be the first to admit how far below their own needs and ideals are their present staffs.

It is true that admirable and ingenious professional techniques, meticulously applied, have produced most effective library mechanics which are sometimes too much relied upon as full substitutes for an educated personal service.

**3. Fact-finding versus research.** In plain truth, ninety per cent of what goes by the name of reference work in our libraries is neither research nor in aid of research. This is not to find fault with it. It is useful, it is worth all it costs, there is need for more and better work of the same sort, much of it is carefully planned and executed with admirable spirit and enthusiasm. But it is elementary, of the ready-made, information bureau type; a good deal of it is trivial, even of that which is directly at the instance of schools and teachers. It is geared too low! A Yale master of arts complained that in six months as reference librarian at a typical normal school his intellect and library training had been put to no severer test than to find a story with a potato as hero.

Some of these limitations of reference work are fixed, of course, by the size, types, and incomes of our libraries; and such limitations are felt most straitly and quickly, as reference demands on a library become intensive, scholarly, and exacting. But such demands seldom are made on many libraries. Most library work is fact-finding or, at most, material-finding as distinguished from research. Research differs from fact-finding as day from night, as a machine-made article from one of hand-wrought craftsmanship. Research is not the quest of a single fact; it is the attempted solution of a problem involving many facts.

Research, unlike fact-finding, finds no complete answer in any single book, on any one page. The answer, or solution, to a research study follows a thorough and careful examination for pertinent materials from which are gathered suggestions, facts, hypotheses, and parts of a complete answer which must be tested and tried before it can be accepted as true. Experiment, observation, testing, comparison, calculation, and other research processes often yield no definite solution or

answer to any problem. The net product of months of study may be but a mass of notes or at most a detailed account of work done with perhaps a discussion of its implications. Yet at every step books may be essential—those known by title, volume, and page, and others unknown, often unsuspected, that must be come at by devious ways and means.

**4. The library's rôle in research.** Speaking generally the library does not do research. It is not a laboratory in the sense that its staff are themselves engaged in or properly may undertake the investigation of research problems. (An exception should be noted in the case of special libraries owned and maintained by a single institution, individual, or association, and specifically charged with the performance of all reference and research activities.) In fact-finding and material-finding (here again sharply differentiated from research) libraries will always find it difficult to avoid doing much of the work. It will always be so much easier to handle the rapid-fire, unrelated questions from a mixed constituency than to train the inquirers to do it, that much of the "four minute" work will always be done by the reference staff.

But with research the line should be sharply drawn between doing and helping others to do. Indeed, this line will quite naturally draw itself, for not even a trained library staff of specialists can always know enough about research questions arising out of steady daily work in the varied fields tilled by the inquirers to assume to undertake their study or solution.

The library's part is an important one nevertheless—very clear and definite. It should have its own collections so well chosen, if possible so notable, in some subjects at least, that it may fairly offer and encourage use by serious students. These collections should be thoroughly organized, not alone in technical and formal ways but with studied facilities for their use and availability on the library premises, with the utmost freedom, informality, and comfort. This may entail special arrangements of material and facilities for study and use now unknown. Catalogs, outlines of the classification, shelf location charts, bibliographies, a wealth of such apparatus there will be, but beyond this, most important of all,

there must be personal service of a quality which shall at once certify itself to the student as at home, at least, in the general field of his work, able to speak its language, to apprehend the viewpoints and methods of scholarship, to be competent, understanding, and sympathetic. Without such interpreters and intermediaries there can not be the most permanent and fruitful relations between libraries and research.

There is, however, a useful kind of research coupled with publication which is done directly and officially by libraries for the purpose of making more easily available notable special collections either of books or of manuscripts or of putting into print for the first time some fundamental source material. Examples of the former are the *Catalog of the Samuel A. Jones Carlyle collection* compiled and published by the University of Michigan Library, and the successive monumental catalogs of the John Carter Brown Library. Instances of the latter are the careful and sumptuous printing of the *Journals of the continental congress* by the Library of Congress, and the many original printings of manuscript rarities in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*. Surely competent bibliographic work ranks as high as any other form of original investigation.

**5. A library research faculty.** Every scholarly collection of books, as it becomes a large or a great library through gift, bequest, or persistent, judicious, and liberal buying, inevitably becomes more varied and complex when approached from the subject side; specially strong subcollections emerge, and the tendency is to break into semi-independent departments which in their interpretation, at least, are separately administered. But by whom? Aye, there's the rub. By whom, indeed?

Perhaps an attempt to describe the ideal custodian of such a collection or department may make sufficiently sharp the contrast with the usual incumbent. Such a description is not easy. Librarians probably are agreed as to the great gulf that separates the actual from the ideal, but an equal consensus is unlikely as to how the gulf shall best be bridged. Speaking

then of ideals, nothing less seems thinkable for a librarian of a notable subject collection or a specialized reference department than a blend, two professions in one person, with such and so much formal training for each as shall entitle the fortunate possessor to practice either. It is often debated whether a lawyer or a librarian makes the better librarian for a law library. The right answer probably is "both." And so when a library comes to have departments of technology, music, art, or what not, it seems clear that one who is as much engineer, musician, or artist as he is a thoroughly seasoned librarian will make each collection most useful to its professional clientele. This points straight to a faculty of specialists comparable to that of a college, each member of which shall be also a professional librarian. A cheering sign that such a library personnel appeals not alone to librarians but to wealthy donors, is noted in the recent endowment of three chairs at the Library of Congress, the incumbents to be competent specialists in music, American history, and the fine arts, whose duties will be to aid advanced studies and the researches of investigation by the expert interpretation of the library's collections. Another interesting recognition of the function of the library as a research center was the establishment of a research staff at the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

It is true that these subject specialists will not be trained librarians. They will by so much fall short of the ideal now before us. But they will be surrounded by and be a part of great libraries, their new work will have been made possible and will at every point be aided by the methods and results of library techniques, and it is a safe prediction that the most useful assistant to musician, engineer, or artist newly turned librarian, will be a person trained in the details of library organization and use. Which brings us to our ideal with two persons instead of one. The trend, however, is towards one.

This is not the place to inquire whence these dual personalities are to come or which profession should have priority in training. That such persons must be found if libraries are

to perform their utmost scholarly service is certain, and since it is certain and is increasingly recognized, the supply will appear. There are indeed at the moment significant plans on foot for extending and enriching the period of library training and more definitely correlating it with acquired proficiency in another field, a program to which future reference librarians and bibliographers may well give heed.

A few college libraries are somewhat similarly served by curators or advisers, usually interested faculty members who consent to an honorary library connection. Their services, however, are concerned almost wholly with the selection and organization of the books, and they thus stop far short of the most interesting and important function of interpretation. Here and there a public library has created a research director or research specialist—pioneers in a field which will soon be thickly peopled.

**6. Library research activities.** The chief business of such a librarian specialist is not to do research. Does someone inquire as to what he *is* to do and be? A fair question indeed, for which a partial answer has been intimated in the third paragraph of section four in the present chapter. To these intimations may be added that he is to combine in an advisory capacity, as research associate, the functions of scholar and librarian.

It is not easy to believe that less than this dual proficiency will most fruitfully maintain and interpret a collection of books. Such work is more exacting than any college teaching. Not only is the field a broader one than is offered by any single subject of formal instruction, but the service, being a personal one and to a far more varied group, has the added interest of greater diversity and influence.

As scholar:

(a) The librarian specialist must have the ability to perceive and thoroughly to appreciate the aims and mental attitudes of the scholar, the student, the expert. This can come best—perhaps solely—from having had a taste, or more than a taste, of the formal disciplines in the same or a closely related field, preferably in both.

(b) Every librarian in a special field should be master of its technique and thus be able to understand the problems that arise within it and their interrelations. No librarian who does not know what the conversation is about can help a scholar much.

(c) He should be able to give acceptable instruction to the research student in the bibliography of his subject and the imperative use of libraries in all investigation both in and after the university. As a librarian he can go but a short distance in such guidance and teaching. It is only after mastery of the subject itself that he can go the whole way. Such teaching is a helpful and appropriate library function and will be better done by a librarian-specialist than by either librarian or specialist alone. These courses can be made as interesting as they are sure to be helpful. At present this ideal librarian-specialist is almost non-existent, and really satisfactory courses in bibliographic and research methods in libraries are given by professors specially appreciative of and versed in that aspect of their subjects.

(d) He will know what books to add to the library. The best professional library book selection stops far short of such knowledge as the specialist alone can supply. The number of poor new books that are revealed by competent reviews and examinations is astonishing. An admirable illustration of the possibilities of thoroughly informed book examination and selection from the librarian-specialist point of view is the *Technical Book Review Index* which for some years has been prepared in the Technology Department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. It has most usefully covered a field occupied by no other library aid. There should be similar aids produced under precisely such auspices in many fields.

As librarian:

(e) He will know so well the great classes of research materials, broader than any one subject, important to all, sure to be referred to often and when so cited very much desired, that through his efforts this highly significant auxiliary material will be acquired by the library.

To cite but two or three groups of such material not mentioned in Chapter 1, section 3, there may be named (a) Festschriften, (b) the accounts of scientific exploring expeditions, (c) the publications of international congresses.

(f) While the specialist will know, better than the librarian, the literature of his own subject, yet the latter is likely to be better acquainted with the formal bibliographies of it, and he is certain to be very much more at home with other bibliography, all of it closely interrelated. More important still, the librarian will know as no one else, catalogs and indexes both general and special.

(g) This librarian-specialist, because of his library training and experience, will be by just so much a broader man than many that he serves. He will be able to suggest untouched sources, an unexplored path, a promising field, and library materials, tools, and aids which will save time or make sure that the search is a thorough one. His own knowledge of the *resources,* not alone of one, but of many libraries, and of the *organization* of great libraries, the overlapping of classifications, the intricacies of catalogs, the collateral resources of other departments—all are so much greater than can be acquired by any outsider that they will continually prove helpful to visiting students.

The following extract from a letter written by the reference librarian of a special library (not himself a "specialist," however) is of interest at this point as an example of close cooperation in research between the scholar and a library which from its "special" character is expected to undertake more of the actual work than would be the case in general libraries.

"When a man comes to me asking for information or a bibliography to aid him in a piece of work he is planning, a paper or bulletin he is preparing to write, or a course of lectures he has to give, I ask him all the questions I can think of about the subject, its relation to other subjects, the definite limits of the piece of work, purpose of the work, class of persons for whose use it is designed, etc., etc. I then talk the matter over with the staff, or the member of the staff who is designated to do the work. I suggest certain reading for her to do to get a good background and a clear concept of what she is hunting for. Then she collects her material and after she has some of it in hand, we call in the man for whom it is being done and go over the

references with him, discussing the value of each reference and its bearing on his problem. We sometimes have many such conferences with the person for whom the work is being done, or, if he is not available, with someone who knows the subject."

This letter well shows what pains are taken by librarians who do not know the subject at first hand. Some of the work described in it (the reading for background and concept, especially) might not have been necessary under ideal personnel conditions. It also illustrates admirably the sort of conference and cooperation that will make the most satisfactory relations between librarian and student.

**7. Standard research procedure.** Science, logic, and practice have worked out a generally accepted method for research work which is not without significance for libraries. It shows how practiced students go at a problem, it shows that bibliography has a recognized part in it, and it suggests at several points the dependence which the research student must have upon books and libraries.

The following outline is taken from Schluter, W. C., *How to do research work.*[1]

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

1. Selecting the field, topic or subject
2. Surveying the field
   Apprehending the problem
3. Developing a bibliography
4. Formulating or defining problem
5. Differentiating the elements of the problem
   Analyzing or outlining the problem
6. Classifying the elements in the problem
7. Determining the data or evidence required on the basis of 5 and 6
8. Ascertaining availability of the required data
9. Testing the solvability of the problem
10. Collecting data and information
11. Systematizing and arranging data
12. Analyzing and interpreting data
13. Arranging data for presentation
14. Selecting and using citations, references, and footnotes
15. Developing the form and style of the exposition

Eigelberner[2] boils down these fifteen steps to five:

1. Analysis of problem
2. Collection of facts
3. Classification and tabulation of facts

[1] Schluter, W. C. How to do research work. Prentice-Hall, 1926.
[2] Eigelberner, Jesse. Investigation of business problems. Shaw, 1926.

4. Formulation of conclusions
5. Establishing conclusions

But study of the more detailed routine is profitable for librarians. Each author has a chapter on bibliographical research. Reid[1] has five chapters on the library's importance in chemical research, but chemistry is better provided with bibliographies and indexes than most subjects. In the Schluter outline above, it is easy to see or surmise that books (and that usually means libraries) clearly are involved in steps 2, 3, 8, 10, and 14, and that one or more of the other steps is likely to take the student to books.

Both outlines are suggestive of an orderly, methodical procedure which may well be invoked for all reference problems not exceedingly simple.

## Bibliography

Dewey, Melvil. The faculty library. The Library, Second series, 2:238–41, July 1, 1901.

Duncan, C. S. Commercial research. Macmillan, 1919. Chap. 4.

Eigelberner, Jesse. Investigation of business problems; technique and procedure. Shaw, 1926.
Chapter 8 is on bibliographical research.

Fleming, A. P. M., and Pearce, J. G. Research in industry. Pitman, 1922.
There is scant mention of libraries; indeed the word scarcely occurs in the book, and then rather as a warning than in praise. Even in a paragraph on "Advantages of documentation" in a chapter on the "Organization of the intelligence," there appears no sign that the library has any part in aid of research. But there is a full and useful bibliography in section 6, in which appear a number of titles about libraries as related to research.

Paltsits, V. H. Libraries as publishers and promoters of scholarship. Library Journal 51:603–5, July, 1926.

Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924. Discusses scientific research, particularly chemistry. Has five admirable chapters on chemical literature, searches, libraries, journals, and patents.

Schluter, W. C. How to do research work. Prentice-Hall, 1926. Chapter 4 is "Developing a bibliography." The book has financial or business research most in mind. An excellent statement of research principles and procedure.

Severance, H. O. How periodicals aid research. Library Journal 53:590–92, July, 1928.

[1] Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924.

## Thought Questions

1. What specific things can the public library do in helping individuals or business organizations engaged in research?
2. How would you plan to stimulate more serious reference service in an industrial community of 100,000 population?
3. List as many advantages and disadvantages as you can in appointing:
   (a) An engineer as head of a technology department in a public library
   (b) A professional librarian to the same position
4. Balance the above and determine the factors which seem to have the greatest weight.
5. Obtain from an experienced reference librarian a complete description of the steps followed in running down a complex reference question. Compare with Schluter's "Research procedure" given in this chapter.
6. What is the Henry E. Huntington Library, and what are its notable features?
7. What and where is the John Carter Brown Library?
8. Why are periodicals one of the most important classes of reference material in research?
9. Controvert the strictures on reference librarians in section 2 of this chapter.

# Chapter 9

## REFERENCE METHODS IN SPECIFIC SUBJECTS AND FIELDS—CHEMISTRY

1. Chemistry as a reference subject
2. Kinds of chemical literature
3. Reference use of chemical literature
4. Handling of questions in chemistry

This and the following chapter will describe and illustrate reference procedure and possibilities in the fields of chemistry and fine arts. These subjects are chosen because of their wide and striking contrasts. One is rigorously scientific with an abundant, well charted literature upon which much of the technical procedure and progress of the subject very intimately depend. The other, as remote as the dog star from atoms and substances, the matter and manner of science, has likewise an abundant but very imperfectly charted literature upon which artistic conceptions and achievements depend scarcely at all. The literature of chemistry is an indispensable laboratory auxiliary—the literature of art is a useless impertinence in the studio. The former is a necessary adjunct to a process significant only in its applications, for which practitioners may be trained. The latter can neither help nor hinder the dreaming and doing of genius. The literature of chemistry is severely factual, scrappy, utilitarian, esoteric, in that its notation and terms have meaning only to its votaries. The literature of art and its picturing are universal cultural possessions. These considerations affect very differently the ease, extent, and manner of use in libraries of the printed literature of these two subjects.

In chemistry the reference librarian can work with assurance. The literature exists and whether it is or is not in his library it can be studied and mastered, and its scope, possi-

bilities, and limitations intimately and precisely known. The demands upon it usually are definite, important, and from serious students. The ideal reference position would seem to be the interpretation of a complete chemical library by one thoroughly trained in both chemistry and librarianship. Such a person can serve chemists better than they ever can serve themselves, not necessarily by doing the work for them but by making it possible for them to work fast, surely, and thoroughly. Few chemists will ever be as entirely at home in any library, even an exclusively chemical library, as a competent librarian with this dual training.

**1. Chemistry as a reference subject.** The literature of chemistry is concededly the most abundant, the most nearly adequate, the best indexed and most readily available of that in any major field of knowledge. Probably in no other subject is there a bibliographic apparatus so complete, so workable and so up to date, especially in threading the mazes of the all-important journal literature. In no other subject can a fact be located as readily and as certainly. All this should enable librarians to serve chemists with reasonable speed, precision, and certainty in any library which contains the principal journals, indexes, and reference books.

The smallest number of books directly on chemical subjects, which will enable a library to be of steady service to a research chemist is about 5,000. The two or three largest chemical collections in this country comprise from 25,000 to 30,000 volumes each. The largest exclusively *chemical* library in the world, that of the Chemical Society of London, has about 32,000. Most laboratory and special libraries run from 10,000 to 15,000. These libraries consist mainly of sets of the principal journals, of course including the half-dozen abstracting journals, the chief reference handbooks and bibliographies, and a selection of from 100 to 150 textbooks in ten or a dozen of the main subdivisions of chemistry. There are closely related categories, e.g., dissertations, patent specifications, commercial catalogs, which would easily yield 8,000 to 10,000 additional titles. Exhaustive lists of all these groups are in Crane and Patterson, *Guide to the literature of chem-*

*istry,*[1] and briefer lists appear in Mellon, *Chemical publications.*[2]

Chemists have long appreciated that a full knowledge of the existing literature is the very foundation of every important scientific inquiry, experiment or research. Yet so enormous has the sum of chemical literature lately become that they have discovered that they neither know their professional literature as they should nor do they know how to use it most efficiently when it is brought together in libraries. Eloquent testimony to this is the recent appearance of a number of such books as Crane and Patterson, *Guide to the literature of chemistry,*[1] Mellon, *Chemical publications,*[2] Reid, *Introduction to organic research,*[3] and other like titles noted in the bibliography at the end of this chapter. Such books are at once an admission of present inability readily to use the professional literature and a long step toward its correction. Undergraduate courses in chemical literature have been established at several colleges and technical schools, and it seems certain that like instruction, much more extended and intensive, must soon develop in graduate courses as well, if chemists are to find their ways through the essential journal and reference apparatus of their chosen field. Such courses would be specially helpful to librarians for there is nothing offered at any library school at all comparable to the course described in Dr. Mellon's book noted above. The thirty titles cited under the captions chemistry and patents in Mudge,[4] the standard library list of reference books, form what clearly is a librarian's rather than a chemist's list. Ten of its thirty titles are bibliography and it omits the *International critical tables, Beilstein,* and *Richter,* three indispensable titles that are on all lists of reference books prepared by chemists. The chemistry section in Van Hoesen and Walter, *Bibliography,*[5] has fewer titles but they seem better chosen and more representative of chemical opinion. Comparison of both these

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927.
[2] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928.
[3] Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924.
[4] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929. p. 137–39.
[5] Van Hoesen, H. B., and Walter, F. K. Bibliography. Scribner, 1928. p. 123–24.

library lists with Crane and Patterson[1] and with Mellon[2] shows how wide is the gap between what is believed to be a sufficient library reference equipment in chemistry for a *general* library and the reference collection which must be thoroughly known to the librarian of a *chemical* library.

**2. Kinds of chemical literature.** Intensive reference work in any subject or field must be founded on a thorough acquaintance with the kinds of literature produced and used by students and workers in that field. Note that the foregoing sentence does not say "a thorough knowledge of the literature of the subject" but "a thorough acquaintance with the kinds of literature, etc." The distinction is important. Few librarians have or can be expected to have a thorough knowledge of the literature of any field save that of their own calling. Too few have that. But a thorough acquaintance with the kinds of literature which are produced and used in and which give character and distinctiveness to the printed apparatus of a single subject is a very different and much easier matter.

This study of reference work in chemistry must therefore begin with a review of its literature with special yet not too restricted attention to what may be called reference apparatus.

(a) *Journals.* Among chemists this term includes not alone those titles issued at fixed regular intervals, in library usage "periodicals" (examples are *Annalen der Chemie, Annales de Chimie, Analyst*), but the further large group of transactions, proceedings, papers, etc., issued usually by chemical or scientific societies or associations and known by librarians as society publications or under the broader term, serials. These latter have come to be of very great importance. Examples are *Journal of the American Chemical Society, Transactions of the Faraday Society, Proceedings of the Royal Society of London.*

It is in journal literature that chemistry is so preeminently rich and full. Its very bulk is almost staggering. *Annalen der Chemie* and *Annales de Chimie* total nearly a thousand

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. Chaps. 2, 3, and 4.
[2] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928. Chap. 8.

volumes. Crane and Patterson[1] list 1,889 periodicals of which 1,263 were still alive in 1927 and being regularly examined by the abstracting journals. Allowing but thirty volumes for each title the total would be 56,670 volumes of journals alone, almost twice the size of any existing chemical library. To help visualize the bulk of this journal literature, Robert B. Sosman[2] estimated that to read aloud at reasonable speed merely the three journals published by the American Chemical Society for the year 1920 would require sixty-four days of eight hours each.

The varying character of these journals with representative examples of each type may be shown thus:

Subject matter journals
- General chemistry
  - Berichte der deutschen chemischen Gesellschaft
  - Journal of the Chemical Society (London)
- Special branches of chemistry
  - Biochemical journal
  - Chemical and metallurgical engineering
  - Cereal chemistry

Bibliographic journals
- Abstracting
  - Chemical abstracts
  - Chemisches Zentralblatt
- Index
  - International catalog of scientific literature; chemistry volume
  - Royal Society Catalog of scientific papers
- Review
  - Chemical reviews
  - Fortschritte der Chemie, Physik und Physikalischen Chemie

By the term "review journals" is meant not only those which review new books but those which periodically and authoritatively review also the progress of some branch of the science for a year or a decade.

*Chemical Abstracts* published in 1926 an 89-page list of the 1,246 journals abstracted in that year. This is the most useful help in this field for reference workers for it locates such of these journals as are in two hundred and twenty-five American libraries, and it gives the recognized abbreviations used in citing with many helpful bibliographic data about

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. Appendix 6.
[2] Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences 11:80.

each title. It is the completest list of current chemical journals.

(b) *Bibliographies*

Bibliographies of bibliographies—examples are:

West, C. J., and Berolzheimer, D. D. Bibliography of bibliographies on chemistry and chemical technology, 1900–1924.

Sohon, J. A., and Schaaf, W. L. Reference list of bibliographies; chemistry, chemical technology and chemical engineering since 1900.

Bibliographies of specific subjects—examples are:

Bolton, H. C. Select bibliography of chemistry 1492–1892.

Schrero, M. Waterglass: a bibliography, 1922.

Original bibliographies

These are of special importance in chemistry, and detailed instructions for their making appear in Crane and Patterson,[1] in Mellon,[2] and in Reid.[3] The making of bibliographies by reference librarians is discussed in Chapter 15 of the present book.

The authors just cited and other writers on research in allied fields appear not to appreciate or to stress the value of a first and full use of existing bibliographies as a preliminary step in exhaustive literature searches. It would seem that one of the most useful services which a library can render is to have all bibliographies carefully cataloged, to have them arranged for easy use, to own as many as possible, to direct attention to their value and helpfulness, and perhaps to search them for the student. Many librarians who do not know enough about chemistry to make a competent and complete search are at home with bibliography and are able to make it much more serviceable to students in all fields than it usually is.

(c) *Reference books.* With secondary sources in the form of monumental or outstanding conventional books, chemistry is no worse and no better equipped than several other great subjects. Not more than two dozen lexicons, handbooks, encyclopedias, and dictionaries are signalized by more than incidental mention in Mellon[4] or in Crane and Patterson, so overshadowing is the mass and importance of the journal

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. p. 218–21.
[2] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928. p. 84–89.
[3] Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924. p. 134–37.
[4] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928. Chap. 8.

literature. These lists with the more restricted selection in Mason's admirable brochure[1] are the best and latest. They should be carefully studied by every librarian who expects to do any serious work with chemical literature, and they may well serve as the bases for selecting a satisfactory working collection.

Among the reference books neither the most pretentious nor the least useful are those compendia of facts and figures which the chemist needs at his elbow in the laboratory. They are tables of constants, lists of substances with their properties, formula indexes, mathematical and physical tables, methods of analysis, and similar indispensable data. Examples are *International Critical Tables, Annual Tables* (Tables Annuelles de Constantes et Données Numériques de Chimie, de Physique et de Technologie), Landolt and Börnstein, *Physikalisch-Chemische Tabellen,* and the *Chemiker-Kalender.* These are indispensable in the special library on chemistry, desirable in any general library with a reasonably strong chemical collection, but of little use in a small general reference collection.

Full lists of chemical books with much helpful description and differentiation will be found in the books referred to earlier in this chapter.[2]

(d) *Patents.* An important group of literature not exclusively or strictly chemical but of keen interest to chemists is that relating to patents. Why this is so, what the significant publications are, and how they are used are so well told in Crane and Patterson[3] and in Mellon[4] that it need not be repeated here.

Patent searches by chemists will naturally be done if possible either in person or by proxy at the United States Patent Office in Washington where are the records, drawings, descriptions, and specifications for fifteen other countries. There are a few American libraries that have the printed specifications of British and German patents and sometimes

[1] Mason, F. A. Introduction to the literature of chemistry. Oxford, 1925.
[2] See footnotes, p. 143–44.
[3] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. Chap. 4.
[4] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928. Chap. 4.

from a few other countries. There are many, however, that have substantial sets of American patents receiving currently the specifications and drawings, and there are still more that receive the weekly *Official Gazette* of the United States Patent Office which is accompanied by an annual list of the patentees and inventions. The utmost that this slender equipment can do is to enable intelligent, interested persons to follow current patent activity and when information of interest to them appears, to get, at slight cost, copies of the specifications and drawings from Washington, and have further search made there.

Libraries may well keep at hand the latest laws relating to patents and trade marks, the *Rules of practice* and such other pamphlets as are to be had free from the United States Patent Office.

(e) *Minor literature.* Candidates for advanced academic degrees, especially that of Doctor of Philosophy, usually are required in both America and Europe to submit in print their theses or dissertations embodying original and sometimes new and important work and research. Such dissertations are numerous in chemistry. More than 7,500 printed separately during the 19th century are listed in section 8 of Bolton, *Select bibliography of chemistry.*[1] The number now certainly exceeds 10,000 with substantial annual additions. They form a group which can not safely be overlooked in making exhaustive literature searches. They are not systematically examined by the abstracting journals, only a few are printed in full in general journals, they are not available through book trade channels, and their bibliography is often confusing. Yet there *is* a reasonably complete bibliography, procurable, relatively inexpensive; and the methods for library organization of dissertations are being worked out. Here is a place where librarians can be of real service to the research chemist. No expert knowledge of chemistry is required to acquire (in special chemical and university libraries) all chemical dissertations and the complete bibliography pertaining to them, to master the bibliography thoroughly, and to evolve a

[1] Bolton, H. C. Select bibliography of chemistry. Smithsonian Inst., 1901.

convenient and effective routine of library organization for the individual dissertations. The reference worker should remember that some dissertations do appear in full in journals and can often be more easily found there than in the original print. Their titles too are usually so peculiarly distinctive that the alert and informed reference librarian will recognize one at sight and thus get a clue toward its discovery. Sometimes the titles of dissertations not yet printed or never to be printed get into the current bibliographical record and can be had only by personal request from either the library of the institution where the work was done or from the head of the directing department.

Another group of useful printed matter which commercial and industrial chemists especially use and are glad to find conveniently accessible in libraries may be called trade literature. It comprises manufacturers' catalogs, house organs, advertising circulars, and bulletins often embodying results of private experiments before they are printed anywhere else. The value and library usefulness of this material is explained by E. H. McClelland, technology librarian of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, in Crane and Patterson.[1]

**3. Reference use of chemical literature.** A study of the literature of chemistry as briefly described in section 2,[2] and an increasing familiarity with the principal handbooks, lexicons, abstracting journals, formula indexes, tables, etc., make it clear that their full, accurate, and easy use (sometimes any use at all) requires considerable training in chemistry and a knowledge not only of at least German and French but of chemical German and French. The command of an effective working knowledge of chemical notation and nomenclature sufficient for literature searches in organic chemistry is a formidable achievement. Many chemists do not have it. It is next to impossible for a non-chemist to locate, in the standard indexes, the more complex compounds without knowledge of the system used in naming them. No one but a chemist can always know how to use *Beilstein* and *Richter*

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. p. 140.
[2] See footnotes, p. 146.

so as to be sure that the most has been got out of them nor can he know the synonymous or related names which must be used in making searches. Chemical notation and nomenclature are a language in themselves. No one without some knowledge of them, plus a professional knowledge of the line of investigation in hand, can sense the pertinence or importance of the items encountered in a literature search, or select those which are significant.

The foregoing paragraph indicates that unless the librarian is also something of a chemist, library reference work with certain books stops with their delivery to the inquirer, and that certain kinds of questions can not be followed through by the librarian because he does not know the technical language of the science. In a way this is as it should be, for as has been said self-help should be the chief aim and ingredient of reference work. In practice the person who best knows how to use books does the work. Usually this person is the librarian. But when he is the visitor, the librarian should delight in the opportunity to stand aside and watch one trained in the subject use his professional literature expertly. He will regret only that he can have little or no share in the conversation. This is not true of all chemical reference work. The rub is to know just when, with what books, and with what kinds of questions the non-chemist librarian is out of his depth.

**4. Handling of questions in chemistry.** It may fairly be said that the literature of chemistry treats of three kinds of things—facts, techniques, and theory. Like other reference questions, the demands which chemists or students make upon this body of literature suggest for their satisfaction and solution the three processes named in Chapter 7—fact-finding, material-finding, and research.

(a) *Fact-finding.* Much book use by chemists, especially in laboratory work or long experiments, is to find facts. This is not surprising when it is recalled that the past century in chemistry has mainly been devoted to ascertaining and recording facts. These records ultimately reach the form of print. As these recorded facts have multiplied, many of them have

been gathered into certain kinds of reference books which are first consulted when need arises. Thus for chemical words not found in regular dictionaries, there are chemical dictionaries in various languages.[1] For the physical constants (e.g., boiling and melting points, solubilities, molecular weights) of substances, compounds, and elements, there are standard compilations of the "pocket-book," "tables" type.[2] These are mainly statistical but are usually well indexed, and any chemical fact question will usually give a name clue which can be followed up through the index. For example, if the index of refraction of sassolite is in request, recourse may well be to *Hodgman and Lange*. The index does not give the word sassolite which seems to be the obvious key-word, but under "refraction" are references to its index figures for liquids, metals, solids, crystals, salts, and gases. If the seeker is ignorant, as most librarians would be, of which of these groups includes sassolite, it takes but a minute to glance at each alphabetic list till sassolite appears with the crystals. In practice, however, the reference librarian should actually run down the above answer only in handling a telephone or correspondence request. For a personal request the book which seemed certain to answer it would be handed to the inquirer as soon as found, i.e., when the words "refraction, index of, for" were discovered in the *Hodgman and Lange* index. The reader should then do the rest.

There are not many of these simpler fact-finding books which are necessary for a reasonably adequate quick reference chemistry collection in a general library. The best lists are in Crane and Patterson,[3] and in Mellon.[4] In any library where such books are bought and used, a thorough familiarity with them must be acquired by the librarians. This will come only from thorough examination and careful study in addition to the practice that comes with their use.

It will be noted that chemistry has a separate and exclusive

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. p. 23, 355, 365.
[2] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928. p. 103–108.
[3] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. Appendix 8, sec. 2A, 2F, 2G, and 2M.
[4] Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications. McGraw, 1928. Chap. 8.

reference literature. In the list of one hundred reference books suggested for public libraries appended to Mudge,[1] there is but one title in chemistry. The conventional fact-finding reference tools, the general dictionaries, cyclopedias, and statistical annuals, *Poole's Index* and *Readers' Guide* are practically worthless for answering questions in chemistry or for finding the kinds of information that will serve and satisfy chemists. It is no disparagement of Thorpe's *Dictionary of applied chemistry,* the foremost work of its kind in English, and a mine of bibliography, to suggest that its cost of $140 might in most public libraries more usefully be spent for standard, carefully selected books of the quick reference type.

(b) *Material-finding.* There are apparent fact questions which prove to require extended search. The structural formula of turmeric is desired. This sounds quick and easy but references to Thorpe shows it to be a controverted matter. The formula is differently given in different books. It is at once of interest to know more about how, when, by whom, the conflicting formulae were worked out. The journal references in the fact books and in the closely related books on coloring materials are examined. They in turn may refer to other articles before full details are found of the laboratory technique of the various experiments.

The librarian's part in this search depends upon how much of a chemist his visitor is. If he is a practiced research worker who knows his literature thoroughly, the librarian will have little to do but assemble the desired books, perhaps locate sets or volumes not in the local library.[2]

Chemists have now and then appeared in libraries, however, who can not translate the journal abbreviations, who are grateful for help in reading German or even French, to whom *Beilstein* and *Richter* are unknown, who seem uncertain as to chemical terms, and who know what they want but are quite at sea as to how to set about finding it. For such a person the librarian can do all that is intimated just above

[1] Mudge, I. G. Guide to reference books; 5th ed. A.L.A., 1929. p. 318–20.
[2] Consult the Union list of serials, or the library list in the List of periodicals abstracted by Chemical Abstracts.

and can often, although not a chemist, suggest sources, point out clues, produce a new, pertinent title which has not yet reached the bibliographies—in short, do everything that the practiced researcher would have done for himself except determine the truth or falsity of statements found in books, which is never the business of the reference librarian.

Sometimes the library is resorted to when it is desired to make a present-state-of-the-art or present-knowledge-of-the-subject survey. The librarian often can produce a thorough review of the last important book in the field under study, the latest handbook, special encyclopedia or annual which can be supplemented by later journal literature.

The original detailed account of X.Y.'s procedure in a certain experiment or laboratory operation may be sought. This search is more difficult. It should be done by a chemist familiar with the bit of research under review; yet if the exact information desired with all external data available can be furnished in writing, a clever librarian often can get quite surprising results. In such a search it should be remembered that English and American chemical books give few literature references to sources. A German book will usually refer to the full original account, a careful study of which (by the chemist and not by the librarian) will generally show why the supposedly identical procedure failed to work in the latest instance. If the ordinary obvious sources fail to produce the desired description, the material-finding effort takes on a broader and deeper aspect and becomes research.

(c) *Research.* From this point further steps in this hypothetical search may best be presented by a chemist in a quotation from Crane and Patterson.

". . . what you will do next will depend upon circumstances. Just one of these possible circumstances will be discussed here. Suppose you have failed to make this procedure work but that a successful procedure is desired if it can be found in the literature. It is well now to assume a negative critical attitude. You approach the literature as one who knows nothing about the subject in question and who must be convinced that this or that procedure is better than another.

"Your search may now well be systematic. You begin with the best text available. You then proceed to the manuals and handbooks. You list in your mind or on paper the various procedures and the advantages claimed for each. You note the materials and apparatus

required and strike out those that are out of the question because of lack of, or inability to obtain, these materials. You then proceed to go through the best abstract indexes. The search may be as extensive and intensive as the library or your time permits.

"The answer to the question as to when one may stop searching the literature again varies with the case. In truth it may truthfully be said that one need never stop. On the other hand, work in the library will never make a chemist and is not a substitute for work in the laboratory. A suitable happy compromise is the wisest course. On continuing his search for aid in the library, things of interest and value are always found unless the searcher has a very narrow-gauge single-track mind. Of course as the systematic search is concluded haphazard methods may be adopted. Such methods will vary widely with the problem and the ingenuity of the worker. No good rules or directions can be laid down. Most of this sort of search is intuitive. The searcher has completed his regular task or else has a few spare moments and takes up a volume somewhat automatically and turns pages. To say what book he has in hand or why he picked it up or what he expects to find is impossible. But presently a word catches the eye, it associates itself with some unanswered question in the reader's mind and he pauses to read a sentence, a paragraph or more. This is perhaps a fair description of how a mind that has made a systematic careful search continues the search of the literature. Such a method was much used by Wilhelm Ostwald, for instance, and was stated by him to be one of the most important factors in his success. However, here again one must be on his guard not to waste time merely. Whatever the permanent value of this habit may be it is probably the most delightful and refreshing part of this search of the literature which is often so laborious."[1]

This graphic and faithful account of a typical "literature search" shows how the research chemist and the student chiefly use the library. Even although ordinarily the reference librarian has no more responsibility or part in such a search than to point the way to the books and suggest a bibliography or a promising subject approach now and then, every reference librarian should know exactly how the chemist, the botanist, the entomologist, uses his literature.

The all important thing about such a search is that it shall discover *everything* on the subject, which may be a compound, a substance, a process, a formula, a product, or a property. Finding out a great deal about any subject usually is easy. Being sure that you have found everything that has been published about it is quite another matter. Yet this is the aim and prime value of most chemical literature searches. Searches

[1] Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927. p. 229–30.

vary in approach, method, and materials with the kind of chemistry (i.e., analytical, biological, industrial) and they differ also with the subjects and reasons for research. A search in organic chemistry for "all previous work" is the most difficult and laborious. Searches may be made by an author who wishes to give credit to the work of others or who is compiling a bibliography; by the manufacturer to find information about possible or proposed products or about his competitor's product; or by the inventor-chemist on questions relating to the existence, validity, or infringement of patents.

In section 3[1] above it is asserted that no librarian without training in chemistry can best serve the patrons in a chemical library. The statement is repeated here with added emphasis. It is particularly true in those special libraries used mainly by trained chemists where the librarians are sometimes expected to make such searches as are described above. It requires chemical knowledge and experience to know when or whether to search forward or backward, not to waste time looking for articles on the use of the vacuum tube in chemical measurements before it was invented, to use the subject indexes to chemical books and journals, above all to know surely whether an article with a promising or apparently pertinent title is to the point. Chemists have lately proposed the "literature technologist" as the latest specialist in an already very highly specialized field. The specifications of the chemists for such a person ignore the very essential matter of library training. Such a person is inevitable and should be in charge of every collection of chemical books, but librarians should have a hand in his training. The expansion of chemical literature has made command of it as increasingly difficult as it is more and more indispensable.

## Bibliography

Annotated list of 115 articles, 1907–26, on chemical literature, appears as appendix 1 in Crane and Patterson, p. 239–44. A few additional titles appear on p. 366.

The following are the most important books now occupying this field.

[1] See pages 149–50.

Crane, E. J., and Patterson, A. M. Guide to the literature of chemistry. Wiley, 1927.
Especially useful are the extensive bibliographies.

Mason, F. A. Introduction to the literature of chemistry for senior students and research chemists. Oxford, 1925.
This pamphlet is so admirable in matter and manner as to make us wish the author had been more ambitious.

Mellon, M. G. Chemical publications, their nature and use. McGraw, 1928.
Written primarily as the basis for an undergraduate college course in chemical literature.

Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924.
Discusses scientific research especially in chemistry. Has five good chapters on libraries, searches, chemical literature, journals and patents. Strongly stresses libraries, librarians and their use.

## Thought Questions

1. Give reasons why the literature of chemistry is larger and more adequate than that of other sciences or subjects.
2. Describe as many library uses as you can think of, for a complete collection of chemical bibliographies.
3. Make a list of "standard carefully selected books for quick reference," as suggested at the end of section 4a.
4. Do you agree that in a public library the cost of Thorpe's *Dictionary of applied chemistry* might better be spent for quick reference, fact-finding chemical books? Give reasons.
5. What do you think of the wisdom or value in library reference work of the "haphazard methods" (following systematic search) described in the last paragraph of the quotation from Crane and Patterson, in section 4c? What are some such methods that might be used in libraries?
6. Why is it never the business of the reference librarian to assert to readers the truth or error of any statements found in books?
7. Set down in order the steps you would take in making a literature search in chemistry.
8. Why are general cyclopedias of little service in library reference work in chemistry?

# Chapter 10

## REFERENCE METHODS IN SPECIFIC SUBJECTS AND FIELDS—FINE ARTS

1. **The fine arts as reference subjects**
2. **Kinds of reference literature and material on the fine arts**
3. **Reference work in fine arts**

**1. The fine arts as reference subjects.** The term "fine arts" as discussed here will include the graphic and plastic arts, music, and architecture. If illustrations are oftenest drawn from music and the graphic arts, it is because they figure more than sculpture and architecture in library reference work.

Fine arts and chemistry were compared as library subjects at the beginning of Chapter 9. Let us recur to this comparison for a moment, having always in mind the literatures of the two subjects. Each is international, world-wide, yet with a significant difference. Arts and artists always have been closely identified with nations and states. Chemistry never has been, and this difference colors and conditions the respective literatures of the two subjects. Greek, Egyptian, Etruscan, Flemish art are terms that convey clear and accepted meanings. Books are written around them. There is a literature of the Florentine school of sculpture, the French schools of painting, but chemistry does not divide itself thus. There is Saracenic architecture and American architecture (thanks to the skyscraper and the grain elevator) but neither a distinctive Saracenic nor American chemistry.

The literatures of both subjects are abundant, but their character and use are in sharp contrast at several points. The literature of chemistry is highly specialized and can be fully used only by the relatively few experts in its subject matter. The literature of the fine arts, however, like the arts themselves, can be read, measurably understood, and appreciated

by all. No technical necessity, no scientific or industrial compulsion requires the literature of art to be fully recorded for constant search and instant consultation. Speaking broadly, the significant use of chemical literature precedes chemical achievement; the literature of art follows creative achievement.

Again, biography bulks large in art literature. The artist and his work seem more popularly inseparable than in science. Lives of chemists (and indeed of scientists) are relatively few, of painters, musicians, and sculptors innumerable; and the demand for them likewise is disparate. The extent and importance of biography in this field are attested by the existence of such books as Thieme, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler,* Eitner, *Biographisch-bibliographisches quellen Lexikon der Musiker,* or Bryan, *Dictionary of painters and engravers,* to name a work oftener found in American libraries.

To sum up: the literature of the fine arts as compared with that of chemistry is at once older, more extensive, very much scattered, more popular and in far greater request; its bibliography is fragmentary, unorganized, fortuitous; its subject matter is seldom so technical as to be beyond the understanding and intelligent service of librarians.

Almost any library, no matter how small, is able to give some help to students of art subjects. The library that has but a few fact-books in chemistry, that is helpless from its own resources when asked for materials or research in that subject, will nearly always have a much better, often a very creditable, reference equipment in the fine arts.

**2. Kinds of reference literature and material on the fine arts.** The first step for the reference librarian who wishes to qualify for work in this field, indeed in any field, is to become generally acquainted with its literature as a whole. From such a survey there will soon emerge and stand out sharply the several classes or groups of material which are of interest to him. After these groups are clearly distinguished and their bibliography mastered, the outstanding individual titles in each will be intensively studied. The general

reference worker naturally can not go so far in this intensive study of single titles as the librarian of a special collection. The reference librarian in a public library of medium size will scarcely have, or need to have, the same knowledge of the literature of art or chemistry as similar officials at the Chicago Art Institute or the Chemical Club in New York. It will be a matter of degree, and conditioned largely by the size and character of the subject collections locally available.

(a) *General encyclopedias.* For reference work in chemistry the general encyclopedias, especially those in English, are almost negligible. In the field of fine arts, however, they are distinctly serviceable. They furnish elementary information in brief form on many broad art topics, and predigested summaries adapted to meet much of the casual, superficial, initial, or compulsory interest in art which marks so much of the reference work in public, school, and college libraries. Many fact-questions of course can be quickly answered from general cyclopedias, but they are especially helpful in certain standard art topics because they are better kept to date than the special cyclopedias and because the ably edited, well established, and dependable art annuals are fewer and poorer than in other fields.

And because biography is so large a part of the history of the arts, the general biographical encyclopedias will be constantly of the utmost use.

Another helpful feature in cyclopedias is the bibliography now nearly always appended, especially to biographical and historical articles. It is never exhaustive or even full, but frequently sufficient.

(b) *Special encyclopedias.* There is no one modern encyclopedia of all the fine arts. Outstanding titles that cover single fields like Grove, *Dictionary of music and musicians,* Sturgis, *Dictionary of architecture and building,* Champlin and Perkins, *Cyclopedia of painters and paintings,* and Macquoid and Edwards, *Dictionary of English furniture* (to name only those usually found in American libraries) are few but important. They are the first resort for other than simple fact-questions and are often so for fact-questions that

are within the time range of the cyclopedias. This time range must be accurately known by reference workers. Reference questions, especially in public libraries, tend toward the very recent. Dictionaries and cyclopedias rapidly get out of date. Revisions and new editions are such formidable and costly projects that reference books already printed must be supplemented by annuals, yearbooks, and who's whos, the number of which in specific fields is constantly increasing. Such books indeed fairly may be regarded as supplements to the best cyclopedias, although there is seldom any business or editorial connection between them.

There are also, especially in music, a number of excellent, useful one-volume reference books, often entitled dictionaries or encyclopedias, which supplement the larger works both in matter and in time. Many of these treat of a single subdivision of a field, as Martens, *Thousand and one nights of opera;* or of the subject in a single period or country, as Longfellow, *Cyclopedia of works of architecture in Italy, Greece, and the Levant.*

What types of questions are best answered by special cyclopedias?—those having to do with the history and theory of a subject, those that seek biography, when it is not required to be exhaustive or too intimate and personal, those that require bibliographic clues for further search.

(c) *Non-reference books.* Of course *all* books are reference books in the sense that they may and will be used by reference librarians. The paradoxical caption of this paragraph refers to the thousands of books on art subjects that are neither dictionaries, cyclopedias, bibliographies nor indexes —that are not and never were meant to be reference books in the narrow and conventional sense. In chemistry such books rank in reference value and use below journals, bibliographies, and reference books, almost at the foot of the list. In the fine arts, however, they are the staple reference material, perhaps at the very head of the list. They certainly would rank thus if the bibliography of fine arts kept pace with its literature, if, in short, it were comparable with the admirable current bibliography of chemistry.

To give an idea of the kinds of questions which must be referred to this class of reference material for any exhaustive or definitive treatment, it may be said that all extended and intimate biography, all detailed art history, and practically all the adequately illustrated works so notable and important in this field, are found in this general book literature. The best, often the sole, information on costume (particularly colored pictures), on commercial art, on interior decoration, about antiques, is to be had either from separate books or from a few specialized journals in restricted fields.

(d) *Bibliographies.* It is not the purpose of this section or within the plan of this book to record all bibliographies of art, useful as such a list would surely be if well done. It is rather to describe the bibliographic apparatus in this field, directing attention to places where it is presented in more detail, and more particularly to point out the sort of existing bibliographies (with a few examples) that are most useful to American libraries doing reference work in art subjects, and how they may be used with most profit.

There exists a vast number, surely many thousands, of printed bibliographies in this field. Brenet[1] filled 152 pages with titles of bibliographies of music alone, thus giving some idea of the extent of such items. Van Hoesen and Walter[2] in a brief review mentions seventy-five bibliographies of first importance in art and music. And yet it is generally agreed by librarians and bibliographers that the bibliographic apparatus in English for any serious study in the field of fine arts is scanty, uncoordinated, fortuitous, much of it poorly done. James E. Matthew in his *Literature of music*[3] says, "It must be admitted that for nearly all our musical bibliographies we are indebted to the industry and painstaking accuracy of Germans." Van Hoesen and Walter[4] (page 90) says, "Much fault has been found with the state of the periodical bibliography of music," and on page 91, "Art and archaeology are in great need of a manual bringing together

[1] Brenet, M. Bibliographie des bibliographies musicales. In Annee Musicale 3:1–152, 1913.
[2] Van Hoesen, H. B., and Walter, F. K. Bibliography. Scribner, 1928. p. 89–94.
[3] Matthew, J. E. Literature of music. Stock, London, 1896. p. 245.
[4] Op. cit.

such bibliographical works as there are," and further (page 92) "What has been said of art and archaeology in general applies to the . . . history of art." The late Mr. O. G. Sonneck,[1] in an article freely punctuated with similar but more caustic comments, refers to the bibliography of American music as "a deplorable vacuum," and music is as well equipped with bibliography as any of the fine arts. The *Internationale Bibliographie der Kunstwissenschaften,* from 1902 to 1920 easily the most important periodical bibliography of art, was unable to continue after the withdrawal of a government subsidy in 1919, and has had no successor. Instances of the same purport might be multiplied.

As in any subject at once so important and of such wide appeal, the bibliographic aids are of two kinds, monumental and popular. The first may be a complete list of current publications in one country or in all countries, usually a journal like the late *Internationale Bibliographie der Kunstwissenschaften* noted just above or a universal bibliography of all books about an art subject, e.g., Solon, L.M.E., *Ceramic literature*[2] or again the catalog of a notable library such as the Allen A. Brown music collection in the Boston Public Library.

The popular bibliography is always selective, listing carefully chosen books likely to be found in many libraries or books easily obtainable. It usually is annotated, restricted to books in English and compiled for a more or less temporary topical use rather than as a permanent record. Examples are *Standard catalog for public libraries, fine arts section,* 1928[3]; Sturgis and Krehbiel, *Annotated bibliography of fine art,* 1897[4]; Bailey, A. L., *Bibliography of biography of musicians,* 1899.[5]

With full gratitude and appreciation for the monumental and universal bibliographies, it is nevertheless true that they

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[1] Sonneck, O. G. The bibliography of American music. Bibliographical Society of America. Papers and Proceedings, 1:50–64.
[2] Solon, L. M. E. Ceramic literature. Griffin, 1910.
[3] Published by H. W. Wilson Co., New York.
[4] Sturgis, Russell, and Krehbiel, H. E. Annotated bibliography of fine art. A.L.A., 1897.
[5] Bailey, A. L. Bibliography of biography of musicians. New York State University, 1899.

are of far less use than the popular sort in all save the very largest libraries or those having extensive art collections. To recur to our comparison, reference work in chemistry is chiefly research, scarcely any of it is popular. Reference work in fine arts in most libraries is chiefly popular, and there can be little or no research save where the great collections are. Few libraries will attempt considerable collections in chemistry. Every library must have many books on the fine arts and must be prepared to do reference work, not research, for all comers. After the books themselves, the most useful aids in such work are these "popular" bibliographies. They should be vigilantly procured. They are inexpensive and when used to the full will be helpful out of all proportion to their cost. Most of them are compiled by or for librarians.

A paragraph must be given to the index, that distinct and useful subvariety of the bibliography. First, the popular periodical indexes (*Readers' Guide* and *Magazine Subject Index*), negligible in chemistry but indispensable in art; second, the library catalog (Avery Architectural Library catalog, Library of Congress catalogs of music and engravings); third, the separate specific index so usefully illustrated by Sears and Crawford, *Song index,* 1926.[1] Some indexes are monumental while others are popular and of universal interest. They may not be characterized here. The good reference librarian will best do that for his own constituency and its needs. But he must know about all of them. These indexes, however, are incidental rather than fundamental bibliography. Their limitations must constantly be remembered. The standard periodical indexes, for instance, are certainly good enough for the average reader interested in art, but serious students sorely need something much better, which does not now exist.

(e) *Journals.* Although there are more journals devoted solely to art subjects than to chemistry, their rôle in current reference work, and especially in research, is relatively slight and their permanent reference value still less when compared not only with the supreme importance of journals in chemical

[1] Published by H. W. Wilson Co., New York.

literature but with the greater importance, in their own field of art, of any of the four classes of reference books described just above. This is because the contents of most art journals (as listed in Ayer, e.g.) are trivial, ephemeral, or freakish rather than solid and enduring. They are not generally indexed, doubtless because they are not deemed worth indexing. They have interest rather than reference value.

But art journals are far from wholly negligible. There is the splendid file of the *Art Journal* (*London*); yet its discontinuance even before the World War merely emphasizes the precarious tenure of a thoroughly first-rate journal in this field. *International Studio* happily survives almost alone among journals in our language devoted to art in general. Mr. Walter in his list of 216 periodicals for the small library[1] finds but fourteen which, under the most generous classification, can be assigned to fine arts. Of these at least four have marked industrial and professional leanings, five are included in no periodical index, and certainly not more than two or three can be considered to be thoroughly high class, permanent reference material, although all are useful in current reference work. These figures indicate eloquently the low estate occupied by art journals in library reference work.

(f) *Illustrative materials.* In even the smallest libraries, reference work in art subjects will require and accumulate a class of materials of the utmost usefulness which can not be forced into any of the above categories. Some of it, the product of printing processes, indubitably is library material. Other articles, while helpful in promoting and enriching the use of books, seem more exactly classified as apparatus, furniture, or museum material. Some libraries use all items listed below, and whether they are furniture or reference material may not be important to decide here.

Portfolios of plates illustrating decoration, design, architectural details, animal and plant forms, costume, etc.
Prints, pictures, engravings, photographs
Music—vocal, instrumental, librettos
Building plans, drawings and blue-prints

[1] Walter, F. K. Periodicals for the small library. 5th ed. rev. and rewritten. A.L.A., 1928. 94p.

Lantern slides
Cinema films and an outfit to show them
Victrola records, music rolls
Mr. Sonneck's comment (and he was a music enthusiast) on the collecting of victrola records and piano-player rolls is "that as the French say they are useful and desirable for purposes of *vulgarisation*."
Local art material illustrating persons, places, buildings, events
A victrola
A piano
And doubtless many other instruments for which there is music suitable

It should be said, perhaps as a caution to the over-zealous reference librarian, that the materials listed above require, for the careful organization which is essential for their fullest use, an amount of time, pains, and cost which can not always easily be found. Ordinary routines for organizing books and pamphlets are useless. Expensive, special furniture and fittings are likely to be required. And yet in precisely the libraries where most has been spent on arrangement, shelving, classification and indexing, are music and pictures most used.

(g) *Summary of the above six groups.* It is impossible to arrange these groups of material in the order of most use in handling reference questions. Such order will vary not only with questions but with reference workers. There may be more than one or even two valid approaches to helpful service on any question. The comparison between chemistry and fine arts in Chapters 9 and 10 is meant to emphasize (1) the necessity for determining for each major subject the respective and relative value of each principal class or group of library materials, (2) the often wide variations among these values in different subjects or fields, and (3) that the reference librarian must come, both by study and by instinct that will grow as study and practice increase, to such a knowledge of these varying values in all subjects as shall enable him swiftly to diagnose each question and recognize the best class of material or book to approach. In one subject it may be newspapers, in another journals (through the indexes), and in a third directories, determinable by training, experience and quick, true thinking.

**3. Reference work in fine arts.** Some of the sources

from which reference work in fine arts focuses upon the typical public library will be here noted. Such a list will indicate its character and scope and should stimulate thought and imagination as to how it may best be handled. Reference work in art comes from:

Students in art schools who will especially want material on design, decoration, costume, period furniture

Motion picture studios (were back-combs worn in the 14th century? and hundreds of other costume questions for which a large picture collection is the best help)

Home builders (grounds, gardens, pictures and plans, and especially interiors, both decoration and furnishings)

Architects (plans, pictures, details of iron-work, of capitals, window-sills, doorways)

Commercial artists (posters, lay-out, lettering, the work of other artists, and above all pictures and clippings)

Interior decorators

Publishers (seeking illustrations)

Picture dealers or collectors (identifying pictures or checking dates or prices)

Music students and clubs making or studying music and art (the library must be ready to make programs, to furnish the history of art or music, past, present, and future, in every country of the globe, with related biographic and critical matter on artists and musicians of all places and times)

"Antique" collectors and dealers (for information about old rugs, china, jewelry, lace, furniture, etc.)

Theatre and stage managers—especially amateurs (costuming, scene-painting, stage decoration)

Then there is work which is initiated within the library: the keeping track of dates of concerts, exhibits, lectures, studio talks, so that reading lists may be made, books segregated, bulletins prepared well in advance. And in libraries with large music collections there is often much reference work to be done in the music room before the visitor discovers or even knows what he wants.

The further work, responsibility even, of the library in collecting material relating to local art, artists, and events, is set forth by Ruth Wilcox in *A.L.A. Bulletin* 18:296–98.

## Bibliography

Art reference round tables. Papers and Proceedings. A.L.A. Bulletin 18:293–98, August, 1924; 19:268–74, July, 1925; 20:479–83,

October, 1926; 21:329–34, October, 1927; 22:392–96, September, 1928; 23:287–92, August, 1929.

Sears, M. E., and Crawford, P., comp. Standard catalog for public libraries; fine arts section. Wilson, 1928.
A useful annotated list of 1,200 titles, so recent that it is not yet widely noted.

Sonneck, O. G. Bibliography of American music. Bibliographical Society of America. Proceedings and Papers 1:50–64.

Van Hoesen, H. B., and Walter, F. K. Music, art and archaeology. In their Bibliography; enumerative and historical. Scribner, 1928. p. 88–94.
At the moment the latest list of the most important bibliographies.

Wallace, Ruth, ed. The care and treatment of music in a library. A.L.A., 1927.

Wilcox, Ruth. The library's responsibility in collecting source material concerning local art and artists. A.L.A. Bulletin 18:296. August, 1924. Also in Public Libraries 30:355–58. July, 1925.

## Thought Questions

1. Compare any two of the following subjects (or *any* two subjects) with the reference literature with which you are reasonably familiar, as chemistry and fine arts are compared in Chapters 9 and 10, especially in the introductory paragraph of Chapter 9 and paragraph one of Chapter 10.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Genealogy | — | Religion |
| Education | — | Games and sports |
| Law | — | Finance |
| Medicine | — | Greek civilization |

2. Why is the formal bibliography of fine arts scantier and less satisfactory than that of chemistry?
3. Cite specific reference uses for each class of material noted in Section two, paragraph f. Can you add to the list?
4. With $1,000 to buy reference books for a public library in a city of 25,000 in *either* chemistry or fine arts, on which subject would you spend it? Give reasons. Can you also give possible reasons for a contrary decision?

# Chapter 11

## REFERENCE WORK IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES


1. Distinctive aspects
   (a) A diverse and unlimited constituency
   (b) Wide range of questions and service
   (c) The branch system and reference work
2. Reference work in the smallest libraries
3. Reference work in small libraries
4. Reference work in medium libraries
5. Reference work in large libraries
6. Reference service to groups
   (a) Children
   (b) Teachers and students
   (c) Study clubs. Debaters
   (d) Special service to adults
7. Telephone service
8. Translations of the classics


This chapter will describe and discuss the kinds and methods of reference work that are or may be done in any public library, stressing those which differ most from reference service in other types of libraries. Discussion of policies, organization, rules, executive decisions, and such phases of the work, is largely left to Chapter 16.

**1. Distinctive aspects.**

(a) *A diverse and unlimited constituency.* The public library clientele differs sharply from that of every other type of library, most of all from the fixed, graded, standardized, immature, curriculum-bound groups served by school and college libraries, and from the smaller, narrower (in subject range) but mature and purposeful groups served by special libraries. The public library serves the entire community. The constituencies of all other libraries are but parts of its community, and in some measure are served by the public library. Any person within the area served by a free public library is privileged to use its reference department without apology, excuse, explanation, introduction or red-tape. It follows that obligations of the public library can be measured only in equally liberal terms. It must literally be ready to serve every-

body. To do this, it should know many more things about its community and the people who live there than any other local agency. It must be universal. No narrow and exclusive interest in or allegiance to school, church, party, business or race may circumscribe its purpose and work. The alert reference department will know by instinct, by absorption, or will have on file, records of all local interests and institutions, with their histories, their changing status and personnel. The average citizen would be surprised to learn, for he seldom knows, how seriously the public library takes its duty of being a general information bureau, and how conscientiously and eagerly it keeps itself ready so to function. The *poor* librarian is content to wait for "interests" and "needs" to show themselves; the *good* librarian anticipates them.

In this *community study,* the wise reference librarian makes use of surveys, local histories, chamber of commerce publicity, official city reports, even the city directory. He notes the questions which the library was unable to answer, to the end that it may not fail again; he records the hobbies or special interests of many citizens and groups of citizens and buys books to serve them; he studies the "occupations" listed in the file of borrowers' application cards, and watches for pertinent new books. He does the things suggested in Chapter 7, section 4.[1] Above all, he reads.

Again, the constituency of the public library is distinctly less educable in self-help than that of the college or school library. It can not be so easily or effectively taught to use the library rather than the librarian. As is brought out in Chapters 12 and 13, school and college libraries serve a stable group which is engaged in learning, and expects to be taught. Its members can readily be brought together and taught how to use the library and the principal reference tools and books. This is neither possible nor feasible in public libraries. The few attempts that have been made to collect adults for such instruction have not been encouraging. As for the children, school and library must cooperate. Library instruction was first suggested to and introduced into schools by public li-

[1] Pages 120–21.

brarians. Much of it still is done by them, both in schools and in libraries, but more of it is being better and more systematically done each year in elementary and high schools. In time it will nearly all be taken over by school libraries, although some parts of it will probably always be most effective when given *in* the public library.

The results of this training, whether given in school or college, should soon show in heightened library aptitudes as these young people grow up. Aside from a generous use of print both in and out of the public library, the chief training of its visitors[1] is mainly individual and incidental. Its reference staff will select for the liveliest effort in this matter those frequent visitors, like teachers,[2] adult students, investigators, whose intelligence and methods of work suggest substantial results. This incidental and individual instruction occurs every hour in the day, and is undeniably impressive in both quality and quantity. Yet, when all has been done, it is a question whether in general and public libraries the reference assistant will not always have to do most of the work himself.

(b) *Wide range of questions and service.* This follows naturally from the diverse and universal constituency. In every other kind of library, the range of reference use may be forecast with reasonable accuracy and assurance. Colleges and schools lay their programs before the reference librarian, and his work follows them closely. There are many striking similarities or repetitions from year to year. In special libraries neither search nor research often strays far from the single subject specialty. But in the public library the lightning may strike anywhere. This has a challenging implication. The public library, although less adequately supported than school and special libraries, is charged with covering the broadest field. This responsibility requires personnel as well as books, and the first of these factors in the public libraries of this country is far from being equal to its immediate and ever-pressing opportunities.

(c) *The branch system and reference work.* This section

[1] More fully described in Chap. 18.

[2] Teachers are more and more being thus formally taught in normal schools and teachers colleges. See Chap. 18.

applies solely to public libraries that have branches, and especially to the great municipal systems with from ten to forty of them.

In college libraries the branches (i.e., department collections) are so differentiated that they supplement the central collection. Each represents the bulk of the best of the library's resources in a single field, and is therefore an independent working collection. They are extensions of the main collection, integral parts of it. Not so in the public library system. There the reference collection in each typical circulating branch (speaking generally) duplicates in miniature the central reference collection. Save for its local color, its reflection of the social and business interests of its community, the reference work that comes to each branch is likely to be much the same as at the main library and at every other branch. The provision for reference work at branches meets much of the need for such service in outlying districts, undoubtedly brings some people to the library who would not come to borrow books, renders a real service (especially with the school population), but for serious study or unusual requests the branch library must always fall back on "central." It is in this close relation, which should be no less than a central supervision, a welding of the reference work throughout the system into one great department, that the success and significance of the work lies. For this essential organization there must be, (1) a central supervisor of branch reference work, (2) a person, more than clerk, at each branch responsible for its reference work, (3) telephone service throughout the system, (4) at least daily messenger service between "central" and branches, (5) prompt skilled service at "central" in filling requests received from branch libraries, (6) a reference material selection service at "central" which shall constantly refer to branch reference assistants for approval titles of new books, and especially pamphlets, which suggest usefulness; this in addition to independent recommendations from the branches.

The most important of these six points is the first. It suggests a separate department or at least a supervisor for branches attached to the main reference department. This

work of supervision now, when done at all, is usually attached to the superintendent of branches, or of work with schools. It is true that most of the present branch reference work is with teachers and pupils, but it can be given greater breadth and depth if competently fostered, and in large libraries it may often be best handled as a separate department.

**2. Reference work in the smallest libraries** (one room, one librarian, budget not over a thousand dollars and not more than a thousand books). No library is too small to give time, thought, space (if only a shelf or two), and especially a line in its budget to a small but carefully chosen group of reference books. The inspiring program for a "community intelligence service" set forth by Dr. Learned[1] may be fitted to the means of the smallest libraries. There are many who will feel that such service more thoroughly justifies the spending of public money than the provision of popular books for home reading. Many people can buy home reading, but a good reference library is not only beyond the means of most homes but its selection and purchase call for a knowledge which only special training can furnish.

The ability of even the smallest library to offer a satisfactory, often a surprising, reference service is greatly enlarged by the growing facilities for inter-library loans. Through the use of outside resources it need no longer be true, as in the past, that the smaller the library the more limited its reference service. People will more and more expect, and should be encouraged to expect from the day a library is opened, that it is not only a place to get an interesting book to read but is as well the best place in town to find all sorts of knowledge and information. The following reference program for the smallest library is adapted from *New York Libraries* 7:70.[2]

(a) No matter how small, every public library should have at least a good dictionary, an American encyclopedia, an atlas, the *World Almanac*, the best book of quotations, and the legislative manual of its own state.

[1] Learned, W. S. American public library and the diffusion of knowledge. Harcourt, 1924. p. 12 ff.

[2] Minimum income needed for proper library service. New York Libraries 7:69–71. May, 1922. University of the State of New York.

(b) From the start it should spend a definite part of its book money every year for reference material.

(c) Except where its income for books is too small or uncertain, it should subscribe each year for at least a half-dozen journals indexed in *Readers' Guide,* should bind these and have the annual and triennial issues of *Readers' Guide* as one of its staple reference tools.

(d) Where there is but one paid librarian, there should be some sort of a subject catalog of the material in all the non-fiction in the library. Analytic cataloging is trebly helpful in a small library.

(e) Systematic efforts should be made to get and to keep in a way convenient for quick reference, and to discard as it becomes obsolete, the important pamphlet material being continually issued by federal and state governments, by charitable, welfare, patriotic and propaganda bodies, and by business and other corporations. Much of it can be had free.

(f) If possible to afford it, the library should have a vertical file case in which to arrange all pamphlet material with pictures, clippings, etc. Each item should have a subject heading and everything should be arranged alphabetically by subjects.

(g) For the chief political and social topics, the debate handbooks published by the H. W. Wilson Company, New York, should be procured.

(h) The small library should maintain an intimate understanding with the state library, library commission, or the nearest large library which will lend books for reference use, and it should use them whenever needed.[1]

(i) In all publicity work the library's reference facilities should be advertised, and the public made to understand that on any topic of interest the library either has or will get good material.

**3. Reference work in small libraries.** By "small libraries" is here meant one with fewer than twenty thousand volumes and a staff of not over six members.

Such libraries (save the very smallest, discussed in section 2 above) usually are in towns large enough to offer opportunities for a considerable and diversified reference service. In large libraries, a rough and informal division of work appears—the beginnings of department organization—but the small library is still one department, and the staff, if not equally good at every post, yet know all parts of the work and are interchanged at need.

As a library grows from "smallest" to "small," its books will multiply, so too its constituency, its physical facilities, and above all its opportunities. New schools, industries, homes, clubs, activities, public projects, bring new people with their new interests and ambitions. To all these the

[1] See also Chap. 5, p. 81–82.

library will react, not passively but vigorously, in exemplifying its rôle of community information center. As it grows, the staff will increase, an assistant will give at least part time to reference work, leading eventually to full department organization.

Reference work in the small library differs more in degree than in kind from that in the smallest library. Equipment will improve, there will be more books on more subjects and they will have a separate alcove or room instead of a shelf. The larger library and staff must also mean better service, not more willing or sympathetic, but more competent in that knowledge of books and things without which the additional books will mean little.

Of necessity, the book selection in small libraries is more carefully considered than in large. Perhaps it should not be, but it is. Every book must count strong, especially every reference book. Perhaps a small library needs a better reference collection than a large library, because there are fewer general books to back it up. The range of needs is about equal, the books to meet these needs very unequal. The encyclopedia is likely to be more used in small than in large libraries, for the latter will have a whole book or a chapter on many subjects where the former must resort to its reference books. Another thing that will help make these few books more used is that the staff of the small library know (or should know) their books more thoroughly, more intensively, than in the large library. They may not know so many books but they know better the few they have. This is because each librarian sees every book at some point while it is being made ready for use, and thereafter lives with it until it is worn out. If to this enforced intimacy with a few good books is added a quick and retentive memory, the resulting reference service will often seem like magic. Certain cataloging expedients stretch slender book resources: e.g., more analytics, title cards for magazine matter separately reprinted, index to the daily papers.

(a) *Local history collections.* Few though its books must be, there is yet one important subject of which every small

library should have, and may have, whether other libraries do or not, the largest existing collection: the history of its town and region. Unless there is a live historical society in the town, it would seem to be a public library obligation to maintain with all possible zeal a local history collection. It can be built up at slight expense; the material is already in the community. The chief task is to bring it together, to arrange it attractively, and to get and to keep interested in its growth those people, found in every town, who care greatly for such a project. A collection as complete as it can be made, well kept and vigilantly enlarged, is a solid satisfaction and a proper pride for both library and community. All local books, pamphlets, pictures, photographs, and posters belong here. Newspapers, town and county histories, genealogies of local families, reports of public officials, will be gladly given if the library is known to be desirous of such items. Even fugitive, slight things, like programs of plays, handbills, church and school bulletins, banquet menus, gather interest and value with age. Beg these things, borrow them, but buy them only as a last resort. Make your wants known, give frequent views and exhibits, and gifts of a similar sort will be made by families and institutions. The reference use of such a collection will be considerable.

**4. Reference work in medium libraries.** Between the foregoing section and the next it would seem logical to interpose a group which might be called "medium" and which would consist mainly of those libraries (perhaps with from twenty thousand to a hundred thousand volumes) that have effected a department organization. As the techniques of reference work, however, are so generally similar in all public libraries as to make a four-group division of them appear quite too finely chopped up, and as the reference work in these medium libraries differs far less in techniques than in organization and administration, the medium group will be found fully treated from that angle, indeed, and inevitably, from both angles, in Chapter 16, The reference department. Section 5, too, of the present chapter is especially pertinent to such libraries.

**5. Reference work in large libraries.** Here is reference work in its finest flower, its utmost variety, its greatest range, with its choicest flavor. The public library is Everyman's library, and to it everybody comes with problems and questions, now sobering in their moment, taxing the resources of the most scholarly, now convulsing in their absurdity, inconsequence and futility, yet all important to the earnest askers.

In large libraries, the facilities for coping with this wide gamut of curiosity and research are extensive. The so-called "reference" books number thousands, the buttressing auxiliary collections tens, often hundreds, of thousands; the catalogs frequently exceed a million cards; the interpreting staff in a few libraries (it will shortly be so in many more) is a considerable group of subject specialists. These are welded into a single department or group of departments which in money outlay, book and personnel resources, and organized efficiency, is beyond that of most entire libraries of a generation ago.

It remains to mention a few outstanding features of reference work in all public libraries but most noticeable in the larger.

**6. Reference service to groups.**

(a) *Children.* All public library work segregates children, and a special creed and technique govern this important activity. Reference work with children, therefore, is done in the children's department until the time comes (at an age that varies in different libraries) when the child is transferred to the reference and adult circulation departments. This transfer may be at a certain age or, as is more usual, it may be gradual, sometimes even through an intermediate library or room. Often when a child does not seem quite ready for the reference department, books are borrowed for his use in the children's room. In other cases temporary permits to use the general reference room may be issued to exceptional children for a specific day, book, or subject. These various ways of transfer must not be allowed to interfere with adult use of the library.

Reference work with children is of two sorts, that which

arises from the child's individual interests and that which is connected with his school work.

It is sometimes questioned whether all this work should be done in the children's department, and indeed there seems no thoroughly accepted dividing line between that and the adult reference department. In truth it is not all done in the children's room. In many libraries that room is very meagerly supplied with reference books, and in some libraries little or no reference work is attempted there, much or all of it—especially that originating in the schools—being transferred to the reference department, and for convenience and effectiveness often segregated in a separate room or alcove. When every school has a library and a librarian, this part of the reference work will presumably be handled in the schools. There is today much close and sympathetic cooperation and good feeling between library and school, yet the most successful working together requires a knowledge of library ways, tools and materials which most teachers do not seem to have. When pupils under sixteen are given as a topic for study and writing "Syncretism in the later pagan movement," when to an eight-year-old is assigned "The Abyssinian War," it would seem that teachers need instruction in making assigned topics clear, in knowing before a topic is assigned that there is suitable material in print, and in assigning topics that are definite, not too broad, and within the child's understanding. These remarks apply especially to the annual crop of commencement subjects let loose upon libraries, many of them good enough pegs to hang some thought and imagination on, but hopeless as the goal of search for specific printed matter. Occasional conferences between teachers and librarians help toward better understanding and more effective work.

(b) *Teachers and students.* Teachers and students are and ought to be a privileged class in libraries. Often a reading or reference room is assigned for their use, its books and journals being such as relate most nearly to their work, or to the professional reading and study which so many of them do. They are urged to bring classes to the library for various purposes. Books are reserved for stated classes and for debates, and in-

dividual students are made so welcome in library reference rooms that they are frequently an embarrassment to the librarian and an annoyance to other visitors.[1]

(c) *Study clubs.* Many libraries send an annual letter to all known clubs, offering help in preparing programs or bibliographies, requesting completed programs, offering to buy books not already in the library and to reserve books for club use. Typical practice of many libraries in this matter is found in the *Survey of libraries in the United States,*[2] volume two, by following up the index references under "Clubs" and "Debaters."

(d) *Special service to adults.* Adult education at the moment is an educational shibboleth—a rather overworked slogan. Its international banner, but lately flung to the winds of the world, soon attracted the attention of the American Library Association, eager to discover in what ways, if any, books backed by informed service might both fit into and advance the new movement and enlarge library usefulness. The result is a sizable report compiled by a representative commission.[3] This revealed among other things that the public library has been prompt to revive, intensify, adapt and extend (using the new term as a focal point) a work which under other names or under no name at all, and rarely under independent administration, has been done by libraries for many years. In some libraries indeed virtually everything connoted by the new term has been done for twenty-five years.

Beyond that, this salutary library study makes it clear that there is a corner of the field of adult education otherwise unpreempted, which clearly is within the sphere of the library and especially of the free public library. It can be cultivated by no other agency so appropriately or with such good prospects for success. This work, viewed in the large and with only reasonable imagination, is very much greater both in extent and in substance than any library has yet done. Some

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[1] Flexner, J. M. Circulation work in public libraries. A.L.A., 1927. p. 115.
[2] American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States. A.L.A., 1926. v. 2.
[3] Libraries and adult education. Report of a study made by the American Library Association. Macmillan, 1926.

librarians have dreamed of it, but money and people have been impossible to spare from the imperative, daily routines during the past fifty years, when extensive rather than intensive development has marked library growth.

Applying these statements to its own circumstances and resources, the public library since 1924 has made earnest and definite efforts to interest individuals, and to some extent groups, in extended courses of reading carefully planned with less regard for an ideal course than for its fitness to the need and abilities of each individual reader. There is general agreement that these efforts are voluntary and free from all thought or hope of credit or credential. They should be regular, consecutive, considered, but pursued wholly for their own sake. Such work is in sharp contrast to the very casual reading done by most library visitors and in almost as sharp contrast to the rather haphazard attention paid by librarians to stimulating and directing such reading or guiding it through an entire subject or program. Even in reference departments of libraries, effort is most often expended on a single question, fact, problem or topic, at most seldom going beyond the choice of books for the preparation of a single article or lecture, or to the making of a study club program and the selection of appropriate books neither too dull nor too deep.

This new work was at first handled in either the circulation or the reference department, depending much on personnel, space, and time available, etc., and a new position, Readers' Adviser, was created. In a few libraries this was separate from any departmental connection, but working with all. As it has been thought through, organized, and launched, it has become increasingly clear that the library's part in adult education is not only reference work but reference work of a high and satisfying kind, requiring for its best performance exceptional qualifications and resources. Indeed the work of the readers' adviser, in subjects or fields represented in the library by separate reference departments, can be better done in and by those departments than by either circulation or general reference assistants at second hand. There are, however, and always will be, so many points of contact with

the circulation department that there must always be the closest cooperation. Indeed, just as the information desk does much of the touch-and-go reference work, so will the circulation department always be acting as adviser to thousands of readers who, indifferent to formal programs, yet do reading that is wholly worth while.

In such work as this the library offers a natural and logical service. Books are, of course, essential for education, and the library recognizes an obligation to provide them in aid of all organized educational work. But beyond this, there must be some effort to meet the needs of occasional individuals reached by no other agency, and too often left to their own efforts. It seems possible, indeed easy, to mobilize these people at and through the library and yet continue to serve them as individuals without merging them with a group. This is the distinctive feature of the library's service, the thing that it would seem better able to do than any other agency or institution. Its work has the advantages of flexibility and of the infinite variety possible in its prescriptions. It can offer a personal direction suited to each reader's capacities which suggests results highly significant and advantageous for the individual when compared with at least some of the "mass production" attempted by correspondence schools and other commercial educating agencies.

This individual work calls for an expenditure of time and thought quite out of proportion to that required for formal group instruction (which perhaps is for the school and not the library), but there are encouraging signs that possible results are likely to be well worth all the extra time and effort. It can not be denied, however, that the element of discussion, that stimulating accompaniment of a really educational exercise, is difficult, perhaps impossible, to achieve in such work as the library is now doing, though its place to a slight extent is filled by the interviews and conferences which inevitably bulk large in personal guidance.

Such, in broad outline, is this new and promising work. Details may be filled in from the admirable printed report, *Libraries and adult education,* prepared by the American

Library Association Commission in 1925, and published for the Association by the Macmillan Company, 1926. Of special interest is Appendix A, "Some library features in adult education," which relates circumstantially the beginnings, methods, and aims of this work in the eight or ten libraries where it is best exemplified. The American Library Association report is garnished throughout with ample bibliographies through which he who is interested in this stimulating work may readily learn more on any phase of it.

But let no librarian, tempted by the pertinence, the intrinsic and potential values of such work to inaugurate it in his library, overlook the fact that the conditions for success involve certain unusual items of personnel and equipment. Briefly, they are, (a) readers' adviser, (b) location, (c) records, (d) the essential bibliographic equipment, (e) books.[1]

*Readers' adviser.* One of the best persons on the staff, sometimes a better person than any other on the staff, should be got for this place. The following indicates the standards set by the profession for such a post. It is a fine definition of a reference librarian!

"Those who serve in the capacity of readers' advisers must possess the highest qualifications. They must have both breadth and depth of knowledge. They must have the facility of the trained and experienced librarian for finding and organizing material suited to the reader. They must have personality, tact, sympathy, enthusiasm and an understanding of educational psychology comparable to that of the successful teacher. Their knowledge and experience should be such that they will be able wisely to recommend suitable books on the same subject to men and women who differ widely in ability, education and purpose."[2]

*Location.* The desk of the readers' adviser should be where it will be seen without looking for it—not exactly *at* the busiest spot in the library, but on the broad highway leading to the place or past the place where the most people go for specific book service. A favorite place is in the lobby, near the main entrance, yet with some provision for a certain amount of privacy, and of course with room for the biblio-

[1] For more extended comment than can be included here on these and other detailed phases of this work the reader is referred to Flexner, J. M. Circulation work in public libraries. A.L.A., 1927. p. 189 ff.

[2] Libraries and adult education. Report of a study by the American Library Association. Macmillan, 1926. p. 29.

graphic equipment and (not too far away) for the books. Proximity to the card catalog is important.

*Essential bibliographic equipment.* Books about books, books about reading, single chapters about both, (e.g., the third chapter in Frederic Harrison's *Meaning of History*[1]), reading courses of all kinds, bibliographies, classified and annotated subject lists of books, standard reference books on cultural subjects when equipped with good bibliographies, these are some of the tools of the readers' adviser. The most important tool in one way is the card catalog of the library, for even after finding a book warmly praised in a dependable list, it must be examined to see if it is equally good for the prospective reader of the moment. The books here described must be not merely in the library but inalienably fixed at the adviser's desk. This will often mean a considerable initial outlay.

The points just above require thoughtful consideration before embarking on the work. They are noted not to discourage but to make sure that such setting and resources are provided as shall insure the success of a work as full of promise and usefulness as any that a library may undertake.

**7. Telephone service.** The following, relating more to public libraries, may be added to what appears in section 4, Chapter 14.[2] A telephone is assumed to be an indispensable part of good reference service, and is more and more used. Every library must have one; every large reference department must have its own. Readers should be encouraged to call the library by telephone; they should get the habit and the library number should be prominent on library bulletins, lists, stationery, and reference forms.

When called up, if possible, avoid having the questioner "hold the wire." Explain that a little time will give better results. Ask when material is needed and promise to call back or set a definite hour, place, and person for the reader to meet when he comes to the library.

The telephone has its limitations. Accuracy can not be

[1] Harrison, Frederic. Meaning of history. Macmillan, n.d.
[2] See pages 217–18.

guaranteed, especially with statistics and in decoding cipher. This risk of error should be made clear to the listener. Nor can the telephone be tied up long enough to read a page or two for copying. The listener must be told that the desired material is held for his use when he calls. Nor should even the chief reference librarian ever give critical information from his own knowledge or memory; authority should be cited for everything dispensed.

The following extract from the current report of a New Jersey public library belongs here.

"Red Tape"

"When other libraries were still believing in red tape, this library would have none of it. Since its beginning the Montclair Library has put the personal convenience of its borrowers ahead of all the other features of the library. For over twenty years the use of the telephone has been stressed. Books have always been renewed and reserved over the telephone. Reports have always been made over the telephone as to whether or not the book wanted was in. Information is sought and answers are given over the wire.

"The volume of special requests is now so large that the library asks its friends and patrons to learn the very simple technique which makes all the difference between rapid and pleasant service and failure:

"*Telephone ahead if possible* saying what information you want and when you will come for it.

"*Ask for exactly what you want.* Don't say, 'Have you a geography of the United States?' when you really want to know the best route to Morristown.

"*Give the library adequate time to find the answer.* Don't say at 8:50 P.M. (library closes at 9:00), 'I want all the material you have on the morals of the younger generation.'

"*If you telephone to the library* give your name and address and telephone number in case the library needs to get in touch with you again. State your question fully and wait for the library assistant to repeat your message.

"*If you send to the library* write out your name and address. Give the bearer of your message ample time to wait for an answer. Remember that the information you want may not always be immediately available. Telephone ahead if possible."

**8. Translations of the classics.** A trifling topic, perhaps, but a puzzling one in all libraries, and one on which something forthright should be said. College and high school librarians are asked by the language professors to withhold translations. History and literature teachers ask for the same books on their reserves. It would be a pity were the librarian

to be on the side of locking them up. The faculty is doubtless within its rights in asking, or perhaps ordering, the library to restrict, burn, or never buy such books, but the lock-and-key policy may fairly be questioned. The library belongs to the college, is exclusively for the college, which can make its own rules as to library administration. But it is unthinkable, childish, that a public library, a general library, should undertake to restrict any such book. Such a library, every library it might almost be said, is bound to have translations of the classics. They are the bulwarks of culture. They may not properly be removed from the shelves or withheld from use at the request of one person or another. There are a dozen right uses for them, if indeed there is any wrong use. To charge the library with the responsibility of letting certain people have a book and keeping the same book away from others, is a bit burdensome, if not unreasonable. Is it not wasted effort trying to please everybody on this point? These remarks apply perhaps as much to the circulation as to the reference department, but in practice it is the latter which is most beset with the matter. A critic-reader of the above, comments thus:

"There are translations and translations. A distinction may be made between giving high school students translations of Caesar and those of Horace and Aeschylus. The use of Jebb's Sophocles should be heartily encouraged, that of the Hinds & Nobles' Handy literals prevented by force if necessary (although the library may need them for quick reference)."

Doesn't it seem futile and paradoxical to buy books, the use of which it may be thought well forcibly to restrict!

The present chapter may not more fittingly be closed than with a sentence from Dr. C. F. D. Belden's leaflet, *The function of the public library*:[1]

"Through its reference service it seeks to furnish the answer to any reasonable question, no matter what its nature or who the enquirer, and to provide him with the books which he needs, so far as they are available, or can be made available; failing in this, it guides the student, whenever possible, to the ultimate sources of information on the desired subject."

[1] Published by American Library Association, Chicago.

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## Thought Questions

1. What features of reference work in a public library would make it particularly attractive to you?
2. What are some of the drawbacks?
3. If you were supervisor of reference service in branches, what things could you do to coordinate the service throughout the system? Which of these do you consider most essential? Why?
4. How can reference service in a small and medium library be keyed toward specialized service?
5. What policies would you adopt in regard to telephone service in a medium public library? Why?

6. Summarize briefly what you consider to be the obligations of the public library in regard to reference service. Support your opinion by reasons when necessary.
7. Do you consider that a public library is within its rights in restricting the use of translations of the classics? Why?
8. What reading should a reference librarian in a large public library do regularly? Why is such reading important?
9. If a child asked for material on an unreasonably difficult topic assigned by his teacher, which of the following procedures would you adopt? Why?
   (a) Tell the child there is nothing on the subject
   (b) Give the child whatever material is available even though it may not be suitable
   (c) Tell him that you want to talk with his teacher about the books she would prefer him to have, and ask him to return on a certain day
   (d) Get in touch with the teacher, tell her that the subject is impossible, and there is no suitable material
   (e) Suggest to the teacher that another subject would be more suitable, and give her a list of topics on which you can supply plenty of information.
10. Would you organize adult education activities in a public library of medium size with the reference or the circulation department? What factors would enter into your decision?
11. Refer to the report, Libraries and adult education, and cite references that would guide you in making an initial collection of books for readers' advisory service.
12. Do you think that you would enjoy the work of a Readers' adviser? Why?
13. This chapter suggests briefly the types of special records required by a Readers' adviser. List definitely the records that you would establish and give reasons for your decision.

# Chapter 12

## REFERENCE WORK IN UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE LIBRARIES

1. Constituencies
2. Reference work in college libraries
3. Reserved books
4. Reference work in departmental libraries
5. The library reference staff or faculty
6. Use of the college faculty in reference work
7. Saving reference questions
8. College library handbooks
9. The college student

**1. Constituencies.** Compared with public libraries, those of colleges and universities are smaller and more limited in aims and work. The latter chiefly are for reading and study within the building, nearly all of it being of the character of reference work, and for such instruction in books and methods as shall make their users more efficient and at home in libraries. University and college libraries noticeably lack that spirit and those activities which are connoted by the word "universality." They serve constituencies that are formally enrolled, registered, matriculated, i.e., precisely specified and limited. They are the libraries of large families, the members of which are perfectly well known, and into which outsiders may come but by invitation or adoption. Public libraries, however, aim at universality. Their most characteristic and distinctive work is the lending of books, the extension of privileges until all ages, classes, groups, literally everybody (including the exactly cataloged school and college communities) shall be equal in library opportunity. Although the clientele of the college library is fixed and relatively small, it is selected with care; and, while neither so small nor so stable as that of the special library, it is much smaller and more stable than that of the public library.

It can scarcely be denied that the faculties of schools and

colleges are chosen with conscientious regard to both personal and professional qualifications. As much can not be said of the students, although at the moment there is a hopeful and salutary tightening of college entrance requirements, a new insistence upon previous wholesome scholastic performance and reputation, which will inevitably and favorably affect both in degree and in kind the use and appreciation of college libraries.

But however easy it may be to get in or out of college, its students are a select group in that they presumably are the fittest survivors of antecedent educational processes, the small number that for one reason or another have desired to go on with school. All these considerations combine to suggest a peculiarly worth-while constituency for the college library, a department which touches the work of every member of the college community. It is a constituency from which more than from any equal, educable group, leaders more and more are coming, a fact which would seem to justify far larger expenditures for books and trained service than many college executives have felt it possible or desirable to urge.

**2. Reference work in college libraries.** The terms "college" and "college library" are not yet used in their strictest sense. They still include in their meaning the "university." To the librarian, the two terms mean very different things, differently done. College library work is that with undergraduates. University library work includes work with undergraduates, but the emphasis is on work with students and faculties of the graduate and professional schools or colleges. But there are so many points in common, including the fact that usage has always discussed both together, that they will not be differentiated in this section.

College libraries must frankly and fully acknowledge that the library exists primarily for the college community. The library authorities and staff may be willing, even eager, to let its privileges be availed of by others, yet they will constantly be given pause in encouraging any such outside use by the needs—the rights they may almost be termed—of that very definite company for which both college and library exist.

And as reference work is the chief service function of the college library, this limitation affects it directly, although more in the inability to lend books for uses unrelated to college work than in offering facilities and help within the library rooms. This limitation should not, however, affect the disposition of the staff to permit the largest possible use of the library by those outside the college community.

The lending of books has always been so small a part of college library work that it is often combined with personal reference service. The former involves less reference work in college than in public libraries, for in the latter many, perhaps most, borrowers come to the library not knowing what books they want, while the college student is usually in quest of an assigned book or a book on an assigned subject. This is recognized in the newer college library buildings, where separate provision is made for the growing (sometimes very heavy and taxing) yet mechanical lending of reserved books for both home and reading room use. This chapter will not discuss any phase of circulation work in college libraries.

Reference work in college libraries may be treated under four captions, two major and two minor. They are:

(a) For the faculty
(b) For the students
(c) For the alumni
(d) For the local community

(a) *For the faculty.* In the first place, the reference librarian, as well as the librarian, should know who every member of the faculty is, his general or specific field of work, his interests or enthusiasms within that field, the courses he offers, the books he has written, especially the one he is writing at the moment. This information will not all be got at the reference desk or in the library. Some of it will accrue from the very alertness and observation which make a reference librarian. Some will come from semiofficial and social relations, and some from no less prosaic pastimes than reading the college catalog and the lists of appointments. With this knowledge, the reference librarian, from his reading, which should be wider than that of any other faculty member, con-

stantly will pick up items of interest to one and another of his colleagues, who, although supposedly in closer touch with their own fields, are yet but human and usually read less than the reference librarian. Among the many things which he should know (especially necessary if he be an "importation") are the history, customs, and traditions of the college. He should be familiar with and alert to increase the collection of college *ana,* perhaps (a delight always in reserve) do a bibliography of it!

Much of all this, like keeping track of new, academic departments and new courses (which bring new reference subjects), new schools, will come to be second nature. It may seem chiefly to consist in getting ready or being ready to help the faculty. Perhaps it is. To be ready always is a substantial asset, and such a person never lacks for opportunities. In many and varied ways such readiness will be laid under contribution. One way, of first importance, must be noted here. The reference librarian may sometimes be of help to the faculty in the selection of titles for lists of required or collateral reading, but he must *always* have a hand in their bibliographic revision before they are mimeographed or printed for student use. He must usually take the initiative in this, at least until the tradition of library revision of library references becomes firmly established. The practical problem of persuading professors to consult the library or to allow a bibliographic editing of their reading lists is often a difficult one. Their lists frequently are not ready till the last minute. They are often blind, misleading, inconsistent, and the professor usually thinks he knows best what is needed. At one university so many students came to the library without adequate instructions as to what was wanted that the negligent teachers were asked to come and sit in the reference room, answer their students' questions, and offer suggestions for effective work. A few came but did not like it. The students profited but the instructors stopped coming. They said it was too hard work. Reference librarians do it day after day. Professors do not always appreciate how much the reference librarian does for his students. Instead of

calling up a professor for more information or to learn what an impossible reference was intended to mean, it would be well now and then to send the class back to the instructor for better directions. It is possible sometimes for reference librarians to do too much for professors.

Faculty relations with the reference librarian may reveal at least four points of view, viz.:

(1) That of the instructor seeking materials for use in teaching undergraduates
(2) That of perhaps the same instructor who is guiding or directing graduate study
(3) That of the mature scholar engaged in independent research
(4) That of the faculty member seeking recreational reading

The reference librarian must be as quick to apprehend the point of view as is the professor to proclaim it. He must not only know, fully and clearly, the differences between these several disciplines, but he must be able thoroughly to appreciate the aims and methods of scholarship and research.

He will not often be consulted as a colleague in the same field for his opinion or as to subject matter, but there is a wide range of inquiries relating to books and bibliography about which the competent librarian may know more than a professor.

As librarians sometimes suggest to publishers fields or subjects not fully covered by existing books, so may they from their wider daily perspective be able, now and then, to indicate new fields for graduate study and investigation. Always the reference librarian will be prompt to seize, and often to suggest, occasions to aid any special study through bibliographic service and by showing those not so familiar with library methods and tools how to make the most of them.

(b) *For the students.* Reference work with the students, graduate and undergraduate, is determined almost wholly by the curriculum. The reference librarian must know this thoroughly. It is his first and chief concern. In small colleges there may well be at the reference desk the latest outline, syllabus, and reading list for every course. Outside reading,

of the sort that all reference assistants do, may well to some extent be on unfamiliar curriculum subjects.

So close is this connection between reference work and the course of study, that it is sometimes argued that it is easier to get at desired information in a college than in a public library, because almost everything does trace back to the curriculum, and many of the same questions reappear year after year. One librarian reports that "There is no real reference work in a small college; the questions are almost wholly in regard to courses and reserves." It is of course true, as intimated just above, that the methods and substance of teaching will greatly affect the reference use of a library, but it would seem that a reference staff that follows current world events and college activities alertly, that buys books to match them, that advertises the library's eagerness and ability to answer extra-curricular questions, could stimulate use beyond that directly connected with the curriculum.

Library work with college students is of three kinds: (1) prescribed, (2) required but not prescribed, (3) voluntary. These will be discussed *seriatim*.

(1) Prescribed work consists of exact reading assignments to specific books, the same assignments to every member of a class which sometimes is very large. To such volume has this work grown that it is now in nearly all college libraries handled as it should be, in a separate room, mechanically, by clerks. It is not reference work.

(2) Required work which is not prescribed is illustrated by theme-writing with choice of subject left to the student, by assignment of topics with no indication or suggestion of sources, and by debate work. This results in much interesting reference work. In theme-writing the student is usually left to himself and the library. The reference librarian will be given plenty of chances to do most of the work, but if wise he will be content with a word here, a question there, a suggestion now and then as to subject or source, leaving the student to find himself among books, catalogs, and indexes in ways that should be helpful to him throughout his college years and afterward.

Although the best college debate work is thoroughly organized and in charge of special "coaches," they are not bibliographers, but are mainly interested in organization and effective presentation of material. The library is and must be so peculiarly the debaters' laboratory that through the "season" a college library might well assign to the debating squads a clever reference assistant acquainted especially with the field of public questions, from which debate subjects chiefly are chosen. Under his supervision the debaters, not the library, would dig out the bibliography, profiting much more thereby than to receive it from the reference librarian ready made. Any fully adequate college library building, too, will have not one or two but several small study, conference, and consultation rooms exclusively for this work. Besides the formal intercollegiate debates upon which the interest and best efforts focus, there are many lesser contests, preliminaries, club and society arguments, which combine to keep the reference department on the *qui vive*.

(3) Voluntary library use is that dictated by personal interest and wholly unconnected with any class work. Examples are "browsing" in the alluring rooms now frequently provided for such pasturage, reading current periodicals, vacation reading, borrowing on any subject.

At first glance it may be thought that there can not be much of this unrelated work. It would seem that with the course of study, the bewildering number and variety of extra-curricular and social activities, and the call of out-of-doors, the indulgence of merely personal tastes, hobbies or interests would be crowded out or lost in the mass.

On the contrary, independent reading is more and more encouraged in colleges and the kind and amount of such individual curiosity and resultant library free-lancing are always a happy surprise to the librarian. It is never so wide that it can not be greatly stimulated and multiplied by a sympathetic reading room and reference administration *plus* competent service.

Sympathy alone will not do it. There must be, if the library is fully to meet its opportunities, a background of education,

training, and experience, at least in the staff members who meet the faculty and students, which shall convincingly certify to them an ample margin of competent helpfulness. Again, it is this voluntary excursioning which affords the librarian a most welcome and too-infrequent chance for individual service to those who seek him through choice and not compulsion.

Through all this work with students, there will run an undercurrent, or perhaps more accurately an accompaniment, of effort to inculcate such a measure of self-help as shall bring about a reasonable facility for independent use of the library. It may not be possible for the instruction described in Chapter 18,[1] to reach all new students, but many colleges now have a carefully planned orientation week for freshmen in which the library shares. In a list[2] of the forty-five formal periods in freshman week program at the University of Maine, 1924, six periods (three lectures and three exercises) are designated for books, reading, and library practice.

(c) *For the alumni.* All college libraries are ready and willing to be of any service to the alumni which shall not interfere with primary obligations to faculty and students. This service is oftenest allowed to develop unaided. Almost no active publicity is given to alumni privileges, and few efforts have been made to encourage or extend them. Amherst, Smith, and Wellesley have experimented interestingly with alumni reading courses, but the library does not appear to have had a hand in them.

Alumni service finds its chief expression in lending books to those who have become teachers, ministers, and to the retired of all professions. Some reference work is done, like advising about book purchases, selecting and sending books on debate or essay subjects. It would seem easier and much more practicable for all but the largest college libraries to do reference and bibliographical work for outsiders than to lend them books. The strict and strenuous campus demands set rigid limitations upon an extensive lending program. But

[1] See page 284.

[2] Doermann, H. J. Orientation of college freshmen. Williams and Wilkins, 1926. p. 102.

reference service can be advertised without reservation or much fear that it will shortly swamp the staff. If it should necessitate an additional reference librarian now and then, the propriety of the request and of the service itself should be promptly conceded. After the millions of dollars systematically wrung from college graduates by their alma maters (or almae matres if the purists insist), surely no finance committee or president will refuse them the utmost reference service from their own colleges.

(d) *For the local community.* Many important colleges and universities are in small towns. Many such communities are unable to provide proper public library facilities for children, schools, and those with no formal college connection. It is felt that the college library should in some sufficient way move to meet the situation. Just whether or how it shall be met is not to be settled here. If the college library does undertake full, popular service to everybody (as at Oberlin), the reference work will be noticeably colored by the new relation. The library must in such case prepare to buy many books which it would not otherwise buy, and the reference department properly may insist upon help and books enough to allow the new work to be pushed and performed as vigorously and competently as if it were independently organized.

Even where there is a separate public library, the college library should be willing to supplement it in every way and to give the closest possible cooperation compatible with the claims of faculty, students, and alumni, all of whom must of course be recognized as having priority. The reference librarian will always try to make a place where outside adults (at any rate) can read or study, and will be of as much help to them as to the college people. He will lend books outside, taking chances sometimes that they will not be needed on the campus, and more often than not will be surprised to find that conflicts occur less seldom than seemed probable.

When there is a wide-awake and reasonably adequate public library in the town, the college reference department will usually prefer to use it as a channel for reference service to outsiders (except its own graduates), lending books to the

public library instead of to its patrons, and referring most individual town requests to the public library, with assurances of the utmost possible assistance.

3. **"Reserved" books.** The thing of prime importance to the reference librarian, hot on the trail of the very information wanted by a waiting professor or student, is that the desired book shall be where it ought to be. Obviously books can not all and always be in their right places on the shelves without a return to medievalism. A library must be mobile. To promote their easiest and largest use, it must be possible to move books freely, to re-group them often, and to lend them widely. And, of course, careful records should note all temporary changes in location. These considerations bring us to the matter of "reserved" books. The term is not used here to denote a book held at the loan desk until called for by a notified borrower, but to denote any book removed from its regular place in the stacks for temporary use elsewhere in the library building. Some of the usual groups of such books formed in college libraries are:

(a) *"R" books.*[1] These are the books selected to stand in one or more of the reading or reference rooms. Usually they are of the sort known as "reference" books. Formerly pretty closely restricted to a few dozen or hundred dictionaries, cyclopedias, atlases, yearbooks, etc., the reference collection in many libraries today contains several thousand standard titles in all subjects. If there is a periodical reading room, a selection of sets marked "P" will be shelved in it. Some libraries have a number of such "letter" collections. A good reference librarian will not let these become fixed groups but will be constantly returning obsolete or little-used titles to the stacks and adding new ones.

(b) *Temporary reserves for assigned and supplementary reading.* As noted under 2(b) above, this is prescribed work, best handled mechanically by the circulation department, for the reason that it is not reference work. It is this work, very heavy in most college libraries, to which the term "reserved

[1] Books marked on plate and back with capital *R* meaning Reference and indicating that they are shelved in the reference room or collection.

books" is oftenest applied. The mechanics of organizing and doing it are described in *Survey of libraries in the United States.*[1]

(c) *Books temporarily located in seminar, debate, and study rooms, changing with courses and instructors.* These should all be charged at the loan desk and there be available on call, and the instructor in charge of the room must be responsible for them. Habitués of the library often embarrass the reference department by leaving other books in such rooms, and by taking away without charge or record those that are there.

(d) *Books reserved from day to day for individual readers who are using them in study.* This is a great convenience to special students or visitors, and saves the time of the staff. Unless followed up closely, it is likely to result in failure so to charge the books reserved that their absence from the shelves is accounted for.

(e) *Open-shelf collections.* A college library is "open-shelf" if its entire collection, excepting books of great rarity or value, is directly accessible to faculty and students alike. Many libraries that restrict access to most books yet maintain groups of books in public alcoves or rooms that are known as open-shelf collections. Interesting facts and figures about both open-shelf libraries and collections are in *Survey of libraries in the United States.*[2] From them it appears that certain open-shelf collections, those in "browsing" rooms, e.g., are expressly outside the domain of reference work or formal study. Most open-shelf collections, however, are available for reference work, and their existence, character, and location must constantly be kept in mind by the reference staff. Assuming that all books in such collections are promptly and accurately charged or marked so that there will never be confusion, uncertainty, or outright error as to where they are, the existence of such collections should be an aid to reference work by saving time and travel for both staff and students.

[1] American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States. A.L.A., 1926. v. 1, p. 237–40; v. 2, p. 182–87.

[2] American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States. A.L.A., 1926. v. 2, p. 167–70.

Many open-shelf collections are created by or for the reference department, and the books in them should be constantly changed so that the newer, better, or most used volumes are thus at hand.

Besides the fairly permanent groups a wide-awake reference department will always have one or two small, frequently changed, attractive groups of new or timely books which may or may not relate to any curriculum subject: Recent drama, Outlawing war, Polar exploration, Famous travelers.

(f) *Restricted books.* By this term is meant books that must be kept locked up, for example, rare books, costly books, books with beautiful bindings, all books deemed appropriate for treasure or rare book rooms. Another sort are bi-lingual dictionaries, digests, synopses, and books like Roberts' *Rules of order,* Baird's *College fraternities,* which can not be kept unless locked up. In most cases it is better not to buy such books, but some of them have such legitimate and frequent uses as to make it both desirable to have copies at hand and yet difficult for the librarian to distinguish the proper from the doubtful uses.

**4. Reference work in departmental libraries.** The reference work that presents itself to librarians of departmental libraries will usually have to do directly and exclusively with their subjects. It can generally be fully handled from the special collection in which it originates. No departmental library, however, can have as large or diversified general resources as the main library, yet there is too often an undue tendency toward self-sufficiency on the part of departmental librarians, a tendency to forget "Central." Real reference work and fruitful cooperation with "Central" and between departmental libraries assume a professional personnel attached to the library staff and not a mere custodian assigned by some other department.

The strongest argument against departmental libraries is the narrowness that comes from the habitual use of a *part* as against the breadth that comes with the constant use of the *whole.* This narrowness often sends questioners away imperfectly or partially served when the central library or another

departmental library might have completed or improved the service. This suggests, too, the wisdom of occasional meetings of departmental librarians, of staff rotation among departmental libraries, of keeping each department informed of the principal reference additions to all libraries, and of a complete and efficient telephone and messenger service between all libraries.

Interdepartmental reference work will be surer, more definite, if supervision over the books added to the departmental libraries is so close as to insure pertinent and coherent collections. When there is doubt as to the best location for a reference book or set, it should be kept at "Central," where hours usually are longer, service often more expert, and catalogs more complete.

**5. The library reference staff or faculty.** Section 5 of Chapter 8[1] maintains that if libraries are, in any real way, to aid research they must have among their personnel those who not only are trained librarians but who are thoroughly acquainted with the literature, history, and methods of the subjects in which the library is strong—in short, a library research faculty.

A thoughtful and perceiving university librarian has lately written:

> "The second group of the staff yet to be developed is an organized group of reference or service librarians, a battery of research helpers. The university library must develop a group of specialized, scholarly reference librarians, all of whom shall be familiar with bibliographic methods and each shall be a master bibliographer in some special field which is strongly represented in the faculty and in the book collection. There is quite as much reason for having a reference librarian in each of the well defined fields of scholarship and investigation as there is for having a group of professors in that field attached to the faculty. . . . It is not only unfair but shows a lamentable lack of comprehension of the nature and scope of scholarship to expect one or two reference librarians to know well the bibliography of all the subjects that make up the curriculum of a university." [2]

A strong argument, perhaps the only one, for departmental libraries is that they tend to develop from the members of

[1] See page 133.
[2] Henry, W. E. Five objectives of a university library. University of Washington, 1927. p. 13–17.

the library staff assigned to take charge of them just such a group of specialist reference librarians.

**6. Use of the college faculty in reference work.** In default of such a *library* reference staff as is described in the preceding section, the reference librarian may make any reasonable use of that group of specialists constantly at his elbow—members of his official family, his friendly professional colleagues—who are a most helpful potential addition to his resources. They can scarcely be used (nor are they likely to be needed) with the ordinary questions that make up most of the day's work. They are busy men and women, and seldom available for quick work, but there they are, a substantial library asset, seldom availed of to the utmost. The reference librarian should have telephone connection with all other departments and an up-to-date list of office hours. Then if he is careful not to trouble the faculty with trivial questions, and is crystal clear in stating all necessary phases of a question, via either memorandum or telephone, much search can be saved and the latest information, or at least a helpful statement, can be procured.

**7. Saving reference questions.** Few libraries save all reference questions. They are not worth saving. A card file of selected questions, with full information as to work done, sources consulted, results, and similar data, is found useful in some college libraries. Many questions repeat annually, and new information can be added. Such a file is often used to orient or break in new assistants. A study of it may suggest interesting or helpful reference lists for printing or bulletin board. One such study is in *Illinois Libraries*.[1]

**8. College library handbooks.** An increasing number of college and university libraries print handbooks giving such facts and figures about the various libraries as seem likely to be helpful or interesting to new students. The fact that a number of libraries have printed several editions of such booklets seems to certify their utility. Some of these handbooks are admirable, tasteful, well printed, indexed, the

[1] College and Reference Section. Discussion of reference problems. Illinois Libraries 8:38–45. July, 1926.

matter well chosen and compiled with pains and care. It is hoped that they are read as widely and thoroughly as they deserve to be. It can not be deemed invidious to mention as models the *Handbook for new students* which for some years has been printed by the Vassar College Library, and *Facilities and resources of the university library for graduate work* published in 1926 by the University of Missouri. Others are listed on pages 61 to 62 of Miss Plum's bibliography.[1]

Much of the matter in all of them aims at instruction in the use of the library. Such handbooks can scarcely take or fill the place of a formal course of instruction[2] but they can be so prepared as to be used in such a course. They are likewise useful to accompany the library's part in orientation week, and with the recent increased attention to such a week may well be somewhat revised and made still more applicable. Many handbooks are so good as to merit a prominent cover or title-page message enjoying preservation and re-reading.

**9. The college student.** The most interesting thing in college reference work is the student with whom it is done. Is he more independent, more capable of self-help or training in self-help, than the average visitor to the public library reference room? In these days he certainly should be, because he is now getting in the high school, from which he has just come, a training which is the equivalent of a college course two generations ago, and especially because this course has frequently included, and is more and more including, the best prepared and administered instruction in the use of books and libraries that is anywhere given. "Then why," the college librarian promptly asks, "is he intellectually so lazy and indifferent? How explain his low or non-existent ethical standards as revealed in the use of the library (in the single matter of 'disappearing books,' for example)?"

In these and similar matters the reference librarian, indeed all reading room attendants, can do much informally, quietly, more by example than by precept, to make library service

[1] Plum, D. A. Bibliography of American college library administration, 1899-1926. (Bibliography Bulletin no. 77) New York State Library, 1926. Supplemented in College and reference library yearbook, number one. A.L.A., 1929.
[2] More fully described in chap. 18.

ideals, standards, housekeeping, in short, library atmosphere, so wholesome, so considerate, so palpable and impressive, that in after-time many students will come to realize and remember how much more than book service they owe to the library and its staff.

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This bibliography is so recent, so full and so carefully grouped by topics that only titles that have appeared since its publication are noted here. A supplement to Miss Plum's bibliography appears in the *College and reference library yearbook,* number one. A.L.A., 1929.

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A study of administrative rather than reference problems but not without value in the latter field.

Wyer, J. I. The college and university library. Ed. 3 rev. and extended. (Manual of library economy no. 4) A.L.A., 1928.

## Thought Questions

1. Does reference work in a college library seem more attractive to you than that in a public library? Why?
2. List ways by which the reference librarian can learn the college community. Which methods seem the most direct and worth while? Why?
3. How would you proceed to extend the reference service of a college library beyond the requirements of class work?
4. What policy would you advocate for a college library in regard to:
   (a) Service to alumni
   (b) Service to the local community
   Give reasons.
5. Do you agree with the author in regard to restricting the use of translations, synopses, digests, etc., in a college library? Why?

6. What means would you employ to coordinate the reference service of all libraries on the campus?
7. Compare handbooks of the libraries of several universities and colleges. On the basis of your study, prepare an outline of a similar handbook, making it as perfect as possible.
8. What features of reference work in a university library differentiate it from reference work:
   (a) In a college library
   (b) In a special library
9. Why is it desirable that the reference librarian revise the reading lists for college courses?
10. Plan a program of cooperation with debate squads which has for its ultimate objective instruction in the use of the library.
11. If possible, visit a college library and observe what is being done to encourage the independent and recreational reading of students. What improvements can you suggest?
12. Does it seem likely that a librarian can be of any help to a professor writing or studying on a subject in his own field? If so, in what ways?
13. Do you agree with the author that the administration of "reserved" books (section 3b) is not reference work? Give reasons.

# Chapter 13

## REFERENCE WORK IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

1. **The field defined**
2. **Distinctive features of reference work in school libraries**
   - (a) **Teaching the use of libraries and reference materials**
   - (b) **Connection of library with school work**
   - (c) **The library's rôle as a centralizing agency**
   - (d) **Group instruction**
   - (e) **Use of the whole library**
3. **Library or study hall**
4. **The reference work most worth while**

For two reasons it has seemed unnecessary to make this a long and detailed chapter. In the first place, as pointed out just below, there are strong resemblances between school and college library reference service. The latter is treated at some length in Chapter 12, and collaterally elsewhere in this book, especially in Chapter 18. Again, Miss Fargo in *The library in the school,*[1] a companion volume in these "Library Curriculum Studies," has devoted Chapters 2, 3, 6, and 7 to an account of school reference work as comprehensive and practical as has been put into print, and other chapters in the same book are of high value in the same connection. Miss Fargo's experience is far greater in this field than is that of the present writer, who gratefully adopts her admirable presentation.

**1. The field defined.** By school libraries are meant those of elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and junior colleges. Reference work is done in all of them. They are seldom organized departmentally, hence all members of the staff are as much reference librarians as anything else.

With respect to reference work the school library is like the college library in that (1) it serves a fixed and relatively small group,[2] (2) its work arises almost wholly out of the

[1] Fargo, L. F. The library in the school. A.L.A. (In preparation)
[2] When contrasted with the universal service of the public library.

school curriculum and is therefore affected by all changes in the courses of study and methods of teaching, (3) much of the so-called reference work is finding or helping to find books prescribed by the courses of study. This kind of work is least in schools where effective instruction in the use of the library trains students in self-help. In such schools the pupils do much of their own reference work and the librarians have more time for personal help to groups and individuals, the opportunities for which are always abundant but too often crowded out by the daily routine.

It is something of a question, even among school librarians, how much libraries and their organization and conduct should differ in the several kinds of schools. These differences appear to be more in degree than in kind and never marked enough to differentiate the elementary and high school libraries as separate types. Certainly the chief differences in reference work in the four kinds of school libraries noted at the head of this chapter are those arising from the different ages of the pupils. The very small reference collections, which, if carefully chosen, suffice for the elementary school, must be considerably enlarged in junior and again in senior high schools, yet they never reflect in either size or breadth similar collections in college or public libraries serving an equal number of people. The school library purposely teaches and encourages its pupils, as a civic privilege, to use the public library reference resources also.

**2. Distinctive features of reference work in school libraries.**

(a) *Teaching the use of libraries and reference materials.* The need for this work, its methods and its value in all kinds of libraries, are treated in Chapter 18. Section 2 of that chapter[1] discusses school libraries, and the bibliography for that chapter lists the best manuals and textbooks. Chapter 3 in Fargo, *The library in the school,*[2] treats at length of the scope, methods, objectives, and official sponsorship of such instruction.

[1] See pages 281–85.
[2] Fargo, L. F. The library in the school. A.L.A. (In preparation)

The elementary and secondary school years clearly offer the most promising and fruitful time for such instruction. Perhaps for this reason, perhaps because school librarians have been more zealous than others to study, formulate, and administer such instruction, it is much better done in the lower schools than in colleges. Indeed, enthusiastic school librarians say that eventually such work will be so well and fully done in the high schools that there will be no need for its repetition in colleges.

While it is true that college librarians are testifying to new and appreciable freshman evidences of such earlier training, yet the differences between college and high school methods, environments, and "scale" are so great, and in particular is there so marked a difference in both size and administration between high school and college libraries, that it seems unlikely that even the utmost secondary school training will prepare the student sufficiently for college and university libraries. There is undoubtedly some present duplication but there would seem an appropriate and useful field for such work in both places, and by closer study and articulation it will in time be properly differentiated. By the use of suitable tests a student's knowledge of the subject may be determined, and through such tests it is likely that the ability to use a library will shortly be required for college entrance.

High school libraries, following the example of college libraries, are beginning to issue manuals; for instance, that of Omaha Technical High School, 20 pages. Most of them are devoted to teaching the use of the library.

In the school library more than in others, current use of the library by students is made to exemplify and illustrate the instruction referred to above. Pupils who have had this instruction are required either to use the library independently or to take the lead in doing so if helped by the librarian. This is more possible with a clientele that is of school age, confined to one building and under a stricter discipline now than later. Speaking broadly, the special library does *all* the work for its users. It is paid to do it and not to train them. Public and college libraries do *most* of the work for their users, the

former probably doing more than the latter. The school library encourages and expects its pupils to do it for themselves and thus trains the most self-helpful users of any type of library.

(b) *Connection of library with school work.* The school library is most intimately a part of the school program and classroom work. It comes closer to teachers and pupils every day than does the college library. Attendance at the library is "scheduled" and compulsory; library activities are "programmed"; "projects" are carried out in the library; classes visit it in a body; committees and conferences, both faculty and pupil, use its rooms; sometimes its reading room is a supervised study hall for all or nearly all the day's periods. All this came about because the library was a late comer to the public school and when it came was attached to the highly organized machinery of a great high school where the principal, not the librarian, thought it would best fit or perhaps be least in the way. School librarians did not greatly relish so much mechanism. Many still think there is too much. At any rate it has knit the library firmly into the school fabric and affected nearly all of its work, though the enforced mechanics of organization make demands upon librarians for such futilities as attendance records, permits, assignment schedules, reports, which take time that many school librarians feel could be better spent in book and personal service.

(c) *The library's rôle as a centralizing agency in furnishing material for laboratory teaching and study.* The passing of the single-textbook and individual-recitation method of teaching and the coming of the socialized recitation with its attendant group instruction, projects, individualization, brought the library its opportunity—an opportunity so well improved that today in many schools every classroom leans heavily on the library for the materials of instruction. The "social" and "citizenship" student clubs likewise have learned that the library plus the librarian is a powerful short-order fact-producer.

This library service more and more is coming to handle much besides books and pamphlets. The new instruction

uses pictures, slides, films, graphs, maps, plans, and a long list of museum objects adapted to visual instruction. Efficiency suggests, although librarians seldom do, that all these materials be recorded, organized, administered by the library—that teachers should find in one place all material, printed or visual, on a subject. Much of this museum material is useful, almost indispensable in reference work, exhibits, and bulletin-making. Certain it is that this composite function of clearing house and depository for a growing list of materials and aids for instruction has come to be a distinctive feature in school library reference work.

Often it is so much easier to bring a class to the material prepared by the library than to take the material to the classroom, that adjournment is taken to one of the library classrooms.

(d) *Group instruction.* The time-honored class-plus-teacher group, stationary in the classroom, has in recent years become flexible, itinerant, and ubiquitous. There is the class, the platoon, the club,[1] the league, the conference, the committee, and the project. Everybody belongs to one or more groups, and groups are everywhere. A class may suddenly resolve itself into sub-groups with chairmen. They may and do frequent the library and have to be reckoned with as groups in reference work. Other libraries may do work with groups through one's or two's, but the school library works with the entire company.

(e) *Use of the whole library.* The school library resembles the special library in that it is kept small and is much more a *se*lection than a *col*lection. It is seldom so large that it is not visible and available to the students. There is no remote stack. Students therefore use, and become accustomed to using, a whole library rather than a few reserved books or the contents of a single room or alcove. The best school libraries offer the most striking examples of a trained constituency making direct use of an entire collection with a minimum of help or intervention by attendants.

[1] Blackburn, Lura, and members of English class. Our high school clubs: a study in extra-curricular activities. Macmillan, 1928. This is a revelation as to the number, range, and activities of student clubs in the modern high school. Even in the elementary school, clubs flourish.

Naturally the limitations of a small library are often felt, and this offers the school librarian opportunity to suggest and point out the facilities of other libraries and to put the pupils into such relation with them as shall not only utilize what has been learned in the school library, but make it clear that a library is not a thing that is left behind when school is done.

**3. Library or study hall.** Good reference work requires not only time (from both student and librarian) and competence, but favorable circumstances and opportunity. It often occurs, in adjusting the relatively new school library with its trained librarian to the increasingly refined and complex organization of elementary and secondary schools, that time for this most significant part of library work, carrying with it the voluntary and unhindered intimacies with books, is almost crowded out. This occurs through making the library a study hall by specific assignments of all its seats for every daily period. This is pursuant to the cardinal principle in school organization that every pupil must be assigned to some known and recorded spot for every school period, and the apparent corollary that the library should share with the gymnasium, classroom, study hall, cafeteria, auditorium, etc., in these assignments. In some schools, to be sure, effort is made to give library assignments to those who request them, or to those named by the librarian; and in high schools there are frequent opportunities for each student to visit the library unassigned and usually two library periods a week regularly assigned, but these still do not always achieve the ideal status. Miss Eaton, from a long experience, summarizes the matter thus:

"The library should be used for work which requires the consultation of reference books and magazines, for assigned collateral reading and for the reading of books and magazines for recreation. It should not be used as a place for students to study their textbooks. A library which is turned into a study-hall loses its distinctive educational and cultural value. Nor has a librarian time to act as study-hall teacher and at the same time carry on the legitimate work of the library."[1]

Obviously if the librarian's time is occupied with supervising unrelated study-hall assignments, handling reserved books, recording attendance, there will be little or no time for the

[1] Eaton, A. T. School library service. A.L.A., 1923. p. 24–25.

always abundant, important, and legitimate individual reference work with students, growing out of their tastes, current events, newly-aroused interests, reading, home life, etc.

Some school librarians feel that formal assignment *per se* is not objectionable or in itself responsible for conditions unfavorable to the best reference work. They believe that if the librarians may have entire freedom to handle the students as they please while in the library, with no responsibility for attendance records or undue externals of excessive discipline, the library may serve more persons more effectively than under entirely voluntary attendance.

This much discussed question is temperately treated by Miss Fargo.[1]

If principals are sometimes indifferent to such a situation, it is only because they have not come fully to see and understand library work and the conditions necessary for its best performance. More and more each year school authorities are coming into agreement with librarians in this matter. If it can be demonstrated that library rooms can be kept full with well-behaving students, busy with reference work, prescribed and unprescribed reading, all closely related to their school work, that is usually the most effective argument with a doubting principal.

**4. The reference work most worth while.** Perhaps section 2 of this chapter, perhaps the entire chapter to this point, stresses too exclusively the formal and scholastic work done by school libraries. It is true that school libraries are more formally used than any others. Their clientele is more precisely instructed, visits to them are more prescribed by schedule and assignment, the largest library service indubitably is linked with curricular activities. But a good librarian will find or make plenty of time and embrace the countless opportunities for informed and sympathetic service to the individual student upon topics which often will be alien to his school work, reflecting his interests, tastes, hobbies, or merely healthy curiosity, sometimes his hopes, his ambitions,

[1] Fargo, L. F. Combining library and study hall. In her The library in the school A.L.A. (In preparation)

or his dreams. Every real teacher knows that there is no constituency so rewarding, so fraught with high privilege and responsibility, as the boys and girls in the lower schools. The librarian meets more of them than does any teacher and shares with them all a wider gamut of subjects and interests. Her stock in trade is of almost universal allurement and if such personal and professional qualities be added to the books as shall forever inoculate with their power, charm, and life-long necessity, boys and girls in their plastic and retaining years, the school librarian truly may feel that she has made a contribution to civilization.

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Especially the articles noted in the index under "Reference use."

## Thought Questions

1. Can a school library have atmosphere? If so, describe its ingredients.
2. What answer would you make to a principal who suggested that the custody and operation of the collection of free textbooks might well be attached to the school library?

3. About how many volumes should the strictly reference collection embrace in a thousand-pupil high school? Name at least twenty titles indispensable to it.
4. Describe in detail an effective procedure in using the public library to answer reference questions on which there was no fully adequate material in the school library.
5. Are pupils in elementary schools too young to profit by formal instruction in the use of libraries and reference books? Give reasons.

# Chapter 14

## REFERENCE WORK IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES

1. Kinds of special libraries
2. An attempt at grouping
3. Reference work
4. Distinctive characteristics of reference work in special libraries
5. Reliance on other libraries
6. Study and research
7. A distinction

**1. Kinds of special libraries.** Special libraries, under just this designation, and with precisely its present connotation, are no older than the name, which was first used in 1909.

No discussion of reference work in special libraries will get anywhere that fails to note at the outset not only the causes which have operated to create them and the purposes for which they are maintained, but also (most striking characteristic of all) their number and the extent of the differences among them.

Special libraries as they are known today were started, and came to have a class consciousness and an organization, mainly because of the growth and specialization of big business in this country. A quarter-century ago a few far-seeing business executives came to appreciate the usefulness (today many of them would say the *necessity*) of an office library owned and run by and for the company's employees, in which would be filed, and immediately available, all the data, experience, knowledge, and history of the organization, and such essential current information as may show what is the best thought and practice in the same field. There were, to be sure, large and long-established public and reference libraries at hand, but it is probable that business men overlooked their service possibilities, or thought of them as mainly literary and recreational agencies, or had learned by experience that they had neither means nor staff to specialize intensively, nor inclination to acquire and organize minutely, a highly concentrated collection of material of limited interest, to be used as an instrument of precision in the day's work.

Doubtless it is an exaggeration to say that there are no two special libraries exactly alike, but certainly it is far more difficult to find two such than to find a dozen precisely similar public or college libraries. It is possible to group special libraries with reasonable accuracy as to ownership and control and kinds of service, but any attempt at a subject grouping results in almost as many groups as libraries.

2. **An attempt at grouping.** Special libraries may fairly be grouped thus:

(a) *According to ownership and control.*

(1) *Libraries supported by public funds or general endowment.* Examples are municipal reference libraries, state law or historical libraries, or any separate collection in a single field or subject.

(2) *Association libraries.* Examples are the libraries of clubs, of local medical or bar associations available to members only.

(3) *Libraries owned by a single company.* Usually a business house, bank, newspaper, or corporation, and used almost wholly by its staff.

(b) *According to kinds of service.*

(1) *Reference and research libraries.* Used chiefly by a constituency limited to members of a single profession, club, or society, or to the more skilled and expert staff of a business house. This is the common type of special library. Many libraries in this category are open to any serious student.

(2) *Welfare libraries.* Open to all employees for reading and borrowing, and in much the same ways that public libraries serve the entire community. Sometimes both reference and welfare libraries are maintained by the same firm. There would seem to be a large and rewarding field for more libraries of this type though the need is often met by a station of the local public library.

(c) *According to subjects.*

Vague and diverse as any such grouping must be, it is possible, nevertheless, to indicate some of the larger or more important kinds. A *working* law library is one of the oldest

forms of the special library. And perhaps it is the word emphasized above that converts what would otherwise be a general library into a *special* library. A comprehensive law library, embracing the literature of international, ecclesiastical, constitutional, and military law, strong in history of the law, and in the humane or historical subjects which have grown out of or into law, such as diplomacy, arbitration, punishment, legal education, marriage, and divorce—such a library is not a special library. It is too broad, too cultural; it goes too far afield; it is too interwoven with history, ethics, philosophy, religion, with all civilization. The special library of law will be the *working* collection (to recur to the term) of compiled statutes, session laws, reports, digests, citators, advance sheets, records and briefs, tables of cases, etc.; in short, the daily tools of the practicing lawyer.

With this distinction in mind, the most numerous groups of special libraries are civic, business, financial (banks and brokers), industrial, religious, law, medical, historical.

Illustrating the diversity among special libraries, the last published directory (1925) shows 975 libraries classified under 92 distinct captions. To discuss these subvarieties separately is beyond the purpose of the present chapter. The file of *Special Libraries* is full of such descriptions.

**3. Reference work.** Special libraries (save welfare libraries, discussed above) exist solely for reference and research. This is particularly true of the most typical, those owned by and which serve business or professional offices and establishments. The function of circulation, with its elaborate equipment and routines, exists only in such services as routing magazines and other material from desk to desk, and an occasional loan, usually to another library. The function of permanent preservation, which bulks so large in the plans, budgets, and calculations of most libraries, fades almost to the vanishing point. Even the important function of acquisition has an eye mainly to temporary tenure and *use*. The collections of special libraries are fluid far beyond those of any other type. Their material, diverted from the swollen torrent of print into a special sluice or race-way, constantly flows

through a relatively simple machinery of organization, and after doing its part in turning the wheels of a particular business or activity, is either used up in the process or passes out again at the tail-race into other channels or to rejoin the main stream.

The special library, or more exactly that variety of it known as the business library, seldom plans or tries to acquire and keep huge collections even in its own field. Most of its stock is unbound and is purposely allowed to remain unbound, for in a few months or years it will be worn out or weeded out. It leans, and always will lean, heavily on the great libraries. It saves nothing solely for the future. Above all, it keeps little merely because it has been useful in the past. If a tiny liberty may be taken with a famous line, the special library may almost say "The present only toucheth me," so intimately is its reference service related to the work of the day and the hour, almost the minute.

With all the above in mind, it is apparent that the character and methods of reference work in special libraries must be so diverse as to be difficult of comprehension or exact description. Happily (for everybody but the author) they are not standardized and are almost impossible to standardize in their routines. It is possible, however, to distinguish and note a few characteristics common to the work of the most typical special libraries, and which are no less interesting and instructive because they contrast so sharply with the reference service in other libraries.

Before these are set down, it should be said that the three forms of reference work noted in Chapters 7 and 8—fact-finding, material-finding, and research—all are done in special libraries. Sometimes the library is a part of, or administered as a part of, one of the research departments of a bank or business house, although usually it will do better work under a separate, professional administration. In either case, few business or special libraries initiate independent research. This is done by other departments charged with statistical studies, surveys, reports, and extended investigations. The library, of course, cooperates actively by getting or furnishing

the material, by suggesting sources, lines of investigation, by compiling tables, digesting, and copying, and in some cases conducting certain parts of the investigation.

**4. Distinctive characteristics of reference work in special libraries.**

(a) *Small, stable clientele.* Most special libraries are more like family than community libraries. For the most part, they serve only their own organization and with many research libraries only a small number of the local staff. Some, perhaps most, libraries nominally are open to any serious student. An outside inquirer would seldom be turned away. Yet in practice few such inquirers come and the conditions of what is virtually private ownership do not encourage it. To those who do come, however, and especially when they are potential clients or customers, most business libraries cheerfully give their best service. The reference work, therefore, in kind, intensiveness, and worth-whileness is much what it would be in college libraries if no one but the faculty were served. There must be moments in special libraries with the smallest clienteles when the librarians yearn mightily for larger constituencies with more personal contacts over broader and more diversified fields.

(b) *No "training" of "public."* In every other type of library, save possibly the now almost vanished proprietary library, much of the reference effort should be given to teaching readers and students to help themselves. In the special library, there is practically none of this. Here is a library where the librarians are paid and expected to make all the search and to furnish the information while the inquirer waits at the far end of a telephone wire, or to prepare it in short order, complete and in good report or memorandum form. Obviously the library staff is thus freed for more and more continuous attention to investigation, study, and search.

(c) *Telephone calls.* These words indicate the insistent "rush" demands that are made on special libraries far more than on others. Reports from some business libraries state that fifty to ninety per cent of all questions come over the telephone. These questions usually are asked by the higher

officials, generally at the moment of need for the information. Business is done at high pressure. Library service of the same speed and efficiency is expected. Under such conditions, almost any request is in order, and undoubtedly the inquirer has as much reason to expect "service while you wait" as the librarian has incentive and obligation to give it. Many inquirers will not wait to be "called back," and naturally most librarians are on their mettle and try to answer such calls while the line is held. That is good service; many questions can be thus answered. But there is a risk of error and probably a loss of time in trying to "make a record" for instant answers. Unless specifically advised that the inquirer is holding the wire and expects to, or unless it is certain that the question can be answered by the book at your elbow, it is better to call back later. In some cases it is the only thing to say. In libraries where from half to three-fourths of the reference work is over the telephone, it is important that someone thoroughly familiar with the resources and work of the library shall handle such calls. It should be the same person as much as may be. The intelligence of the voice at the other end is often the main measure of the library's value and general efficiency for those who do not visit it in person. Manner and personality are conveyed over the telephone just as clearly as in a face to face interview. Further comment on this subject is in Chapter 11, section 7.[1]

(d) *Highly concentrated and specialized materials.* While the acquisition of material for a special library may not always be a simple matter, yet it is a fairly definite and exact one. No field or subject can be so independent, so sharply defined, so clean-cut, as to afford an automatic or infallible criterion for the choice of materials. Every subject dovetails or interlocks with some others. The literature of every subject embraces chaff as well as wheat and the needs of special libraries are so diverse that what is wheat for one is chaff for another. Yet undeniably the problems of selection are simpler than in general libraries. The material sought is usually well known within its field, current and standard. It is intensive, to be sure, much of it ephemeral and not in trade

[1] See page 182.

channels, yet not difficult to get if looked after at the right time. The aim, then, is to collect only the absolutely essential things bearing directly upon the questions or subjects of the business or activity with which the library is connected, and to bring this material into the closest physical relation consonant with such a minimum of arrangement, indexing, and marking as shall ensure its most effective use. The exceptionally restricted field (when contrasted with the scope of the general library), the limiting of the library to the indispensable items of constant use (usually this is enforced by high cost per square foot of eligible office space), frankly facing a large and constant use of other libraries—all this offers a unique and frequently a stimulating and challenging background for reference work.

There is, however, a class of material difficult to acquire and of signal usefulness, which is peculiar to the special library. It is the unpublished information resulting from research, experiment, interview, correspondence, and arising from the day's work or acquired from other libraries or agencies doing similar work. It may be mimeographed, typed, original letters, notes on conferences. In business it is often private and of the nature of trade secrets. In legislative reference libraries it or its immediate use may be confidential.

An impressive instance of the concentrated material so favored by and so useful to special libraries is their large use of commercial information services.[1] These predigested tabloids are too expensive for wise purchase by the general library, with its reference demands as varied as all knowledge, although in a large city where there are no special libraries, the general or public library may well have a few of the best of these services. It may almost be said that the general library becomes special the moment it needs and uses a "service." In most instances these "services," such as Babson, Prentice-Hall, Harvard, and Moody, come straight to the library and are usually routed or lent from there. In banks they sometimes go directly to the officers or departments having most need for them.

This concentrated and often apparently scanty material is

[1] See Chap. 5, sec. 6, p. 86.

also very compactly housed; not only because space in special libraries (as indeed in all libraries) is peculiarly at a premium, but quite as much because compactness ministers to quick use. The vertical file is the chief container; no book is kept entire when but a part of it is needed; new material is sharply scrutinized as to its indispensableness; acquisition and organization routines and records are simple enough to allow for easy and informal outflow as well as intake; the pertinent resources of other libraries are compressed to a drawerful of cards; there is more pride in keeping the library as small as is consistent with utmost efficiency than there is in its growth. These statements are true more particularly and wholly of the library which serves a single owner or business agency than of the one which recognizes a larger clientele and an obligation to maintain an exhaustive collection in its field.

(e) *Large use and elaborate organization of clippings.* In general libraries, the use of clippings, save perhaps in genealogy and local history, is slight, almost incidental, and often despite lively misgivings as to whether they are worth the required work.

In special libraries, where often the chief effort is to be up to the minute, where yesterday's data are obsolete or undesirable if today's are to be had, obviously clippings are of first importance. Their statements may require verification, tomorrow's may contradict today's, but business, both big and small, seems to find them worth much labor, expense, and space.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company subscribes to six clipping bureau services in different parts of the country, clips four hundred magazines monthly, and two copies of eight New York City dailies each morning. Ten people are engaged in the cutting, mounting, cataloging, and filing of this collection, which in 1925 numbered over five hundred thousand clippings and had not been weeded out since its inception in 1902. Two copies are kept of all items. These are filed in vertical file cases in two different arrangements: one, alphabetico-subject, the other geographico-

decimal. Each arrangement has its separate catalog. Of very important articles sometimes as many as three or four copies are made.

In other libraries, several newspapers and trade journals are regularly clipped and the clippings sent to interested department heads or other employees who may dispose of them as they please; they are not returned to the library and no clipping file is kept.

Sometimes clippings are temporarily filed in folders or envelopes, unmounted, alphabeted by subjects, and weeded out every few months. Those deemed of permanent value are mounted and are often transferred to the main vertical file. The others are destroyed.

The library of the Standard Statistics Company Inc. uses a dozen clerks to read, mark, clip, paste, route to interested employees, and file the thousands of items that result from clipping over two hundred newspapers for financial and investment news on railroads and corporations. These are filed under company names in spring-back loose leaf binders. This collection of clippings is twenty years old and covers several hundred thousand companies. Its use averages three hundred times a day, by the statistical, research, and inquiry departments. In 1925 seventy-three thousand telephone calls were answered from this collection.

These examples show that clippings are deemed worthy of much more attention in special libraries than in other kinds, and how much more time and money are spent on their organization for reference use. The reason for this greater esteem and use is clear. Clipping in a public or *general* library is in a sense vague and aimless; the field is too vast, the chance is a small one that any particular item or subject will ever be asked for; intensive clipping is not worth while except in special cases, usually local topics. But the *special* library has its assured clientele, its narrow field, its permanent corps of experts and research workers. Its librarian soon comes to know his work, his constituency, the character of the demands upon the library. These demands are sure, steady, reasonably consistent, and within firmly fixed limits not (as in general

libraries) uncertain, spasmodic, fortuitous, and wide-ranging.

(f) *Abstracting, translating, digesting.* All special libraries, especially in the sciences, lean hard on current periodicals. The research staff of a laboratory, the editors of a journal, foremen or superintendents in factories, have come to expect libraries to keep them in prompt touch with the latest or most important books and articles in their fields. State and city officials, legislators and congressmen, while not ordinarily expecting or demanding such services, are usually grateful for it. In rendering it, reference librarians are alert to learn of new books or journals, to examine them carefully for matter likely to be of interest to any member of the library's "public," to bring this pointedly and regularly to the notice of such persons, and to abstract all articles indicated, or even to translate foreign articles. Many special libraries send a daily or weekly bulletin to those desiring such service, in which titles of new books and articles are not only noted, but brief digests or descriptive notes are added.

**5. Reliance on other libraries.** In some cases a special library may be the largest and most complete in its field, e.g., the Army Medical Library in Washington, the Library of the Association of the Bar in New York City. Usually, however, the special library limits its scope and effort to a small, precise field, and relies on the proximity and facilities of other libraries for collateral and supplementary material. This is particularly possible and noticeable in great cities with large and varied library resources. The story is told, and it may well be true, of the "librarian" who had no books at all in his "library" but had record of the location of all books in his subject in eight other libraries in the city, and had such working arrangements with them as to make possible the easiest borrowing or use of their books by his constituency.

Special libraries in their reference work lean hard not alone upon the great general collections but upon each other. Their librarians are well organized, especially in the largest cities, their meetings are frequent and fruitful, their publications (through the Special Libraries Association and its local chapters) aim at promoting inter-library use by recording,

describing, and indexing the resources of all special libraries. Instances are the subject index of informational material in the three hundred special libraries of New York City compiled (but, though available for use, not yet printed) by the local chapter of the Special Libraries Association and the *Special libraries directory, 1925,* which indexes by subjects, and under each library lists important special collections.

Despite such efforts and the resulting recognition and moderate practice of this interdependence, there is yet far too little practical organization of all library facilities and collections looking toward their utmost use by all. The Special Libraries Association in America, with its local associations, has done much through its meetings and its publishing, but it recognizes that much remains to be done. In this connection a lively and hopeful interest attaches to the following statement of plans and scope issued by the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaus[1] formed in England in 1924:

"Its primary object is to coordinate, in the general interest, the many collections of specialized information already in existence, to act as a clearing-house for existing sources of information and a medium of intercommunication between those engaged in their development and use. Its program includes the indexing of sources of statistical and other data; coordination of abstracting services for scientific and technical societies; an increase in the accessibility of periodical and other literature in national and local centres; registration of classified panels of translators for the service, of particular industries, sciences and arts; and an increased provision of photographic and other copying apparatus."

These matters are all parts of the vital problem of avoiding waste of motion, means, energy, and time in the location and use of books and other sources of information. No matter how compact, condensed or wisely selected special library material may be, or how complete an outfit of catalogs, indexes, and bibliographies may have been brought together, it must be supplemented by the material itself. And the amazing new facilities for speed, accuracy, and safe transportation which crowd miracle upon miracle in dizzying

[1]Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaus, 26 Bedford Square, London.

swiftness into the list of daily possibilities, will nowhere make for more salutary results than in the fields of library coordination, when once librarians are awake to all that they may do. And it is the special library that has most to gain, yet very much to give, in this waxing program of coordination.

**6. Study and research.** Most organizations that maintain special libraries also do considerable study and research through departments variously termed research, statistics, reports, publicity, etc. The growth of such commercial research in recent years has been tremendous and has accounted for the formation of many libraries in business houses. The research departments usually rely wholly on the library for information, for material, for suggestions, and for clues, and they should be able to count upon a thorough knowledge of the business of the company and at least a general knowledge of the aims of its research workers. Supplying them will inevitably form a large part of the reference work of each library. Sometimes it will be desirable or even necessary to add to the library reference staff a subject specialist, although such a person, valuable as his expert knowledge and authority may be, will always be greatly handicapped in his usefulness to students by unfamiliarity with bibliography and reference tools.

The function of the reference library, strictly stated, is to aid students and not to do their work for them. All libraries, however, do some bibliographic work and now and then a bit of study or research. It is interesting to note that the owners of some special libraries devolve upon their staffs a large amount of such work, in some outstanding instances relying entirely upon a very competent library personnel for statistical and other reports, surveys, and studies.

**7. A distinction.** As has been stated, the special library is solely a reference agency. Any discussion of its reference work is of necessity a discussion of the special library itself, and in the present connection it seems well to repeat with emphasis what is perhaps the sharpest distinction between it and other libraries.

The special library (to speak of its most typical examples) is concerned chiefly, sometimes wholly, with the current reference use of print. The public library has the same concern plus the circulation and presentation of print, two very laborious, intricate, and costly additions. The public or general reference library adds to the program of the special library a concern for the preservation of print for all future time and use. Its thought and obligation go beyond today.

The reference work of general and special libraries is so unlike in manner and in matter as to be almost complementary. Each might well use the other more, not so much for mere fact-finding as for the more enduring, substantial, and significant work which can only be done in libraries and in which each can help the other greatly because of their very diversities in aim and methods.

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This represents the most extensive study made of special library methods. It covers the administration and every kind of activity in special libraries. Many methods are presented, and a survey made of those in most general use. A good handbook for all special librarians, file clerks, and business executives. It is valuable to those who wish to organize a library, or to those who are administering one. Nothing else of its kind in print.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. For 250 years library development has been steadily away from private or restricted collections of books, and towards the ideal represented by the free library. How then explain the special library?
2. As they appear to you, what are the attractions and advantages of special library work over those of college and public libraries?
3. In what respects does a special library connected with a business organization differ from a business branch of a public library?
4. What are the three or four distinctive features of reference work in a special library?
5. What are the chief problems met in selecting reference material for a special library? Contrast these difficulties with those of selection for a college reference department.
6. Would a special library need to advertise, to the same extent as a special department of a public library, its ability to give reference service? Why?
7. How would the methods used in (6) differ? Why?
8. The staff of the special library does unlimited reference work without question. In all other libraries much effort is given to training users in self-help. Explain this inconsistency. Which principle is the valid one? Should both continue? Why?

# PART III

## Administration

# Chapter 15

## THE REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

1. The reference librarian
2. Educational qualifications
3. Personal qualifications
4. Staff qualifications
5. Why reference work?

**1. The reference librarian.** The first and chief item in the equipment of a reference department, its pivot, its focus, its keystone, is the reference librarian. A great library is not a sufficient substitute for him, although it will multiply his effectiveness. An exceptional collection of reference material will largely lie fallow without his fertilizing and productive powers. The library by itself can be understood, appreciated, and fully availed of only by the very few who know books and how to use them. Most people are not thoroughly at home with books, can not make the best possible use of library resources without informed guidance and expert help. It is useless to attempt reference service without a reference librarian.

Any attentive reader of these chapters will inevitably develop a mild but growing wonder whether there exists anywhere in heaven or on earth a single person completely qualified for reference work as it is here described or implied. The answer is easy. There does not. The present chapter, attempting a composite picture of the ideal reference librarian, is therefore a flat contradiction in terms. How picture the non-existent? But ideals are wholesome, more alluring to formulate than to live up to, and not wholly out of date. A statement of them seems worth while.

Much has been written about the requisite qualifications for librarians. The consensus seems to be that only a celestial and omniscient spirit would fill the composite bill of particulars. Anyone interested to attempt a definition of either the raw material or the finished product will find plenty of well-considered phrases in the remainder of this chapter.

**2. Educational qualifications.**

(a) *Academic.* There is a growing but not undue insistence among librarians, trustees, and the standard-setting agencies that follow library training, upon more, almost the utmost, general education. This finds its chief expression in the rapidly advancing standards for admission to library schools. There is a rush toward requiring a bachelor's degree for entrance. From present signs there will soon be no approved school open to those without the B. A. degree. A glance at the present educational status of reference workers will show how far the new standards have gone beyond those of the recent past that have produced the reference personnel of today.

There are few reference librarians today who have a graduate degree, and those who have the first degree in arts are probably in the minority among librarians doing exclusively reference work. Hundreds of reference workers are innocent of any formal training (professional instruction excepted) beyond the high school, and there are hundreds of libraries where the only reference service that is provided or available is from those who have had neither college nor library training. The chief reproach to library reference work is that in too many cases the librarian scarcely knows what the inquirer is talking about, inevitably shows it, and quite as inevitably the inquirer deems it futile to continue the relation.

The librarian-specialist[1] who is to be the reference librarian of the future, can result only from the liberal, general type of education as basis for added intensive training in two fields, namely a special subject and library work. This will require at least two or three years of graduate work before library training is reached.

(b) *Professional.* It is recognized that there is much useful training for reference work outside the library schools. Its earliest form is training "on the job," learning by doing, practicing on the public; and so long as there are no recognized requirements for practicing librarianship (as once there

[1] See Chap. 8, sec. 5, p. 133.

were none for practicing law or for teaching) this sort of training will persist.

A step beyond this runs the gamut of apprentice class, training class, library institute, summer school, general school, and college courses taken as an "aside," and their equivalent in experience, travel, etc. The reference librarian of a large public library affirms that "ten years of varied life and travel are better reference training than a year of library school." They ought to be; it takes ten times as long to get them. A judicious and extended mixture of these expedients, when added to exceptional native ability, has produced splendid reference librarians. The pity is that they could not have had the best preparation under the most favorable conditions.

But leaving out of further consideration these rather fortuitous or makeshift agencies, we come to the library schools, those formal agencies which are henceforth to train more, and more nearly all, reference workers. The present maximum and rather exceptional preparation of a reference librarian is a bachelor's degree plus one, perhaps two, years of graduate work, and one or at most two years of library training. There are few who attain this program of eight years beyond high school. Salaries are too small to warrant it. The same time spent in training for almost any other calling will bring better pay and prospects. The present rank and file will scarcely average college plus one year of library school: five years beyond high school.

It is clear that this eight-year possible maximum by no means has become common, that the average reference assistant is still two or three years short of it, and yet a number of influences are already at work emphasizing the desirability (even tending to require it) of adding two or three years to this eight-year maximum, especially in preparing for reference positions in the largest libraries.

(c) *Ideal status.* In detail, then, these new standards and requirements constitute the ideal towards which training for all library work is moving, and as reference work concededly requires quite as much education and training as any other library positions, they directly affect its practitioners.

This ideal status is four years of college plus graduate study for two or three years in a special field, plus a full library training (at present two years with a possible third) colored as much as possible by the book subjects as distinct from the technical and administrative courses. This aggregates a new maximum of perhaps ten years. It really means training for two professions. Most people find it hard enough or sufficient to train for one.

Like most ideals, this one must for a long time at least remain a counsel of perfection, a mark at which to shoot, thoroughly worth shooting at, to be sure, but a bit of marksmanship which can be indulged in only by those with plenty of time and money, an inbred taste, and an assured hereditary expectation of long life. Occasional persons will appear who have been able and eager to devote enough years and energy to such a preparation, but it seems likely that most reference librarians will and must be content, for formal training, with a four-year college course and at most two years of library training.

In time, as special libraries increase and the subject grouping, administration, and interpretation of books are more and more emphasized, as salaries rise, and as opportunities for advanced library training multiply, differentiate, and become more highly specialized, an increasing number of librarians will spend an additional year or two in preparation.

If it is agreed or found to be the case that for a long time to come few will take more than a maximum of five or at most seven years, after high school, to prepare for reference work, the utmost consideration should be given to making these years as profitable as possible. Are there any changes in the usual undergraduate curriculum which will make bachelors of art or of science better reference librarians? Is not the present arts curriculum variegated enough? Will not the introduction of a series or group of "primer" or "synoptic" courses only promote and aggravate smattering?

Is the question not, in brief, one of smattering versus solid specialization? Can any undergraduate major be more than a smattering, much less an undergraduate minor, when

measured against the requirements for guiding reference and research work in a great collection of books? Was ever a B. A. or a B. S. a real specialist in anything? Again, if such summary or general courses are deemed feasible or profitable, should they not be restricted to prospective librarians only? And how is this to be done? Few who enter college know what they are going to be when they get through. Much less do those who become librarians always know or even suspect their ultimate goal. Are not such courses, then, better, or possible, in a graduate school of librarianship, when the vocational decision has been made, when the early stages of the professional training have been passed?

Since returns from representative libraries show that most of the reference and research demands on them are in the fields of the general sciences (both pure and applied) and the social sciences, these two fields would thus seem to be indicated as the most profitable majors and minors for any students who as early as the beginning of their college course have made a vocational choice. But in choosing (after languages, conceded to be of first importance) the first and strongest consideration must always be the taste of the chooser. Should a keen or controlling preference exist for some subject not in either field, the student may feel pretty sure that there will always be library opportunities which will lay under tribute any special training or body of knowledge.

Once more; if for years a minimum preparation for reference work must be faced, and if any approach to an ideal preparation is to be very slow, what can be done in the meantime to use present facilities for library training to make the best reference workers? Obviously more freedom in electives in present library schools would seem to do this, but at a sacrifice of a more general professional preparation. There are those who think it is important for a reference librarian to know even the technical and administrative sides of the work nearly or quite as well as his own.

**3. Personal qualifications.** The following study of the traits deemed of first importance in reference work has been

prepared by the Library Curriculum Study of the American Library Association, with the assistance of Emily Hardesty Kenagy. More than a score of chief librarians and reference librarians of representative libraries of different types were asked, through a series of questions, to name the most important qualities sought in reference librarians, and to describe these qualities more exactly by stating the actions which best revealed or exemplified them.[1] Application blanks and other literature of library schools were examined and the traits most desired in prospective students were noted. The resulting material was abundant and generally excellent, and it was difficult to cut down the number of trait actions submitted and still faithfully and fully represent all phases of each trait. The result is undoubtedly the fullest, most careful and sober study of the subject that has been made.

It is true that the traits are identical with the list printed in Miss Flexner's *Circulation work in public libraries*.[2] The very number of them, too, may seem a bit formidable to neophytes. The present suggestive and stimulating definitions, however, are new, and they amply compensate for the duplication and redundancy. They may profitably be compared with the "trait actions" in Flexner.[3] The alphabetic order of the earlier book is here replaced by the order of importance of the twenty-seven traits in reference work as determined by the votes of thirty-eight eminent librarians, each of whom was asked to rate each of the twenty-seven traits 1, 2, or 3, as of primary, secondary, or tertiary importance. The number of those rated 1 multiplied by 3, of those rated 2 multiplied by 2, and of those rated 3 multiplied by 1, yields the total score found after each trait name. The result merely indicates *major* importance, for the traits are all important.

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[1] For a more complete account of the methods employed, the student is referred to Flexner, J. M. Circulation work in public libraries. A.L.A., 1927. Chap. 13.
[2] Ibid., p. 274–79.
[3] Ways of consciously developing traits are presented by W. W. Charters in Flexner, J. M., op. cit. Chap. 13.

## Traits and Trait Actions

1. Intelligence. 114
   a. Grasp quickly what is wanted and know where to look for it
   b. Recognize your own limitations and know when to ask for assistance
   c. Find material that fits the request
   d. Stick to the question without getting side-tracked in the search for material
   e. Give intelligent information over the telephone

2. Accuracy. 110
   a. Read accurately; cite references without error
   b. Give careful and correct information
   c. Do correct indexing and filing
   d. Obtain from the reader correct information over the telephone

3. Judgment. 109
   a. Size up the reader and select material which fits his experience, his capacity, and his purpose
   b. Avoid sending a reader to too many places
   c. Note the relative importance of requests and distribute your time wisely
   d. Know when to approach readers and when to let them alone
   e. Be willing to relax rules and to lend material if the occasion demands
   f. Know when to search and when to refer a reader to another source

4. Professional knowledge. 102
   a. Know and recognize subjects and know where to look for information
   b. Cultivate and widen your knowledge of literature and of your community
   c. Know library resources and appreciate the various uses to which different books may be put
   d. Show a specialized knowledge of one or two subjects and know several foreign languages

5. Dependability. 98
   a. Get assignments done on time
   b. Carry a search for material to the last detail
   c. Work well without supervision
   d. Strive to get exactly what the reader wants
   e. Keep questions and names of readers confidential

6. Courtesy. 94
   a. Show kindness and interest in all dealings with readers
   b. Answer the telephone politely
   c. Listen to the reader until he has completed his request
   d. Notice people who enter the room, and show a readiness to serve

7. Resourcefulness. 92
   a. Figure out a way to find some remote fact
   b. Watch for shortcuts and develop better ways of doing things
   c. Go to sources other than books—experts in the community
   d. Meet different classes of people on their own level

8. Tact. 92
   a. Serve several readers at once so that each feels he is receiving the best attention
   b. Ask skilful questions to discover what the reader wants
   c. Avoid making a reader feel inferior
   d. Make each reader feel that his question is important
   e. Avoid finality in giving a negative answer to a request

9. Alertness. 89
   a. Keep your eye and ear open to pick up valuable bits of information
   b. Notice material called for which is not in the library
   c. Know all up-to-date material on a subject
   d. Offer your services to people whom you see hesitating or aimlessly searching the shelves

10. Interest in work. 87
    a. Show a genuine enthusiasm for your work and an interest in advancing it
    b. Cultivate a genuine love for books
    c. Strive to improve in order to give better service
    d. Show unflagging interest in your work throughout the day
    e. Develop some special subject as your hobby

11. Memory. 87
    a. Relate subjects with each other and with sources
    b. Show an orderly memory: e.g., memorize books and their location on shelves
    c. Remember faces and names; connect people with their jobs and their interests
    d. Develop a memory for events and library resources

12. Mental curiosity. 82
    a. Possess a genuine curiosity to find out about things and to discover their various possible uses
    b. Show an analytical mind—research ability
    c. Enjoy ferreting out information
    d. Be eager to discover how new books may be used

13. Interest in people. 81
    a. Strive to understand people and to get their point of view
    b. Take time to show readers how to use the library
    c. Telephone or speak to various readers about new books in which they might be interested
    d. Be kind to readers who are working under a handicap: blind people, foreigners, etc.

14. Imagination. 80
    a. Read meaning into obscure requests and draw from the reader what he wants
    b. Collect in advance material which may be wanted in the future
    c. Suggest possible new sources for material
    d. Run down a difficult question by intelligent guessing; use your intuition
15. Adaptability. 79
    a. Turn easily and quickly from one subject to another
    b. Work happily in emergencies
    c. Show willingness to acknowledge your own shortcomings and to accept help or suggestions
    d. Try out new things or do old things in a new way
16. Perseverance. 72
    a. Make a thorough effort to get material from out-of-the-way places
    b. Go after material in spite of difficulties and inconveniences
    c. Stick to a question until the reader is satisfied with the material or with the effort made to find it
    d. Keep trying until you get the reader's point of view
17. Pleasantness. 68
    a. Look up and smile in a friendly way, especially when a stranger enters
    b. Help others cheerfully
    c. Develop a sense of humor
    d. Carry your share of the disagreeable work without complaining
18. Cooperativeness. 67
    a. Cooperate with the staffs of other departments
    b. Help other members of the reference staff
    c. Make information which you find available to others on the staff
    d. Work overtime and substitute for others willingly
19. System. 67
    a. Present material to the reader in an orderly fashion
    b. Carry a search through methodically and surely
    c. Establish a good filing routine
    d. Organize your work systematically
20. Health. 63
    a. Do a hard day's work without showing fatigue
    b. Meet people seven hours a day without growing nervous and irritable
    c. Keep a grasp of yourself, physically and mentally, during emergencies
    d. Hear distinctly
21. Initiative. 63
    a. Voluntarily do special pieces of work for which you see a need
    b. Turn a search to unusual places

c. Make suggestions about new methods and new books
d. Assume responsibility; offer to compile a needed bibliography

22. Industriousness. 61
a. Search questions thoroughly; do not dread the effort involved
b. Keep the routine work up to date
c. Use your spare time to benefit your work
d. Avoid the appearance of indolence and indifference

23. Speed. 60
a. Get the right material quickly
b. Recognize a subject readily
c. Show both mental and physical quickness under high pressure
d. Handle books with the speed which indicates familiarity

24. Poise. 57
a. Keep your self-possession in trying situations
b. Meet all kinds of people easily
c. Put the readers at ease by an approachable manner
d. Show an even temper at all times

25. Patience. 54
a. Do not show undue haste in disposing of one reader to go to another who is waiting
b. Work with difficult or dull people without showing annoyance
c. Show the same forbearance late in the day that you show earlier
d. Carry through a prolonged search without showing impatience

26. Forcefulness. 51
a. Approach people with assurance, so as to win their confidence readily
b. Stand up for your own work
c. Represent the reference department effectively in general staff meetings
d. Show at all times that you know your work

27. Neatness. 48
a. Keep your desk tidy
b. Maintain neat and attractive bulletin boards and displays
c. Keep files neat, clean, and legible
d. Be careful about your personal appearance

If another summary statement is in order, it may be said that the ideal reference librarian must love Books, Folks, Order.

His love for books should be contagious, making him quick to see and eager to embrace every opportunity to encourage and promote their use. It should be scholarly, not superficial; informed, not pretending.

His love of folks may be rendered accurately by the term "social-mindedness," a blend of cooperativeness, interest in

people, and pleasantness. He will be agreeable physically and personally, a sane, broad, vital, and exceedingly curious person, keen to get to the heart of a student's problem.

His love of order agrees with and finds its justification in Pope's dictum, "Order is Heaven's first law," and its apotheosis in the library classification and catalog.

A final admonition suggested for keeping the librarian human is: have some outside interest or recreation which has nothing to do with library work. Love your work and prosecute it with vigor, but don't be ridden by it. You will be a better librarian because of the perspective so gained.

**4. Staff qualifications.** Section 3 discusses individual qualifications. This section purposes to consider the qualifications of the reference staff as a whole, a much more elusive and intangible thing.

At first thought, it would seem that if every member of a reference staff could be hand-picked and if there were always money enough to get the very best discoverable person for every post (how the charm of fairy tales pursues us!) all problems of the qualifications of the staff as a whole would disappear. Captains and coaches tell us, however, that team play is harder to perfect than individual brilliance, and that there are no problems so difficult and obscure as those that go with an all-star team.

Some matters worth the deep study and untiring effort of the head of every reference department are:

(a) How to maintain a true *esprit de corps*
(b) How ideals may be kept sharp and fresh
(c) How to bring a staff to top efficiency and to keep it there
(d) How the members of a staff may hold on to their cumulated training and experience
(e) How far may specialization be encouraged and achieved in the average reference group
(f) How to coordinate the work of specialists in relation to each other and to the general reference librarian
(g) How to correlate effectively administrative, routine, and strictly reference duties among different grades of assistants

Little more can be done here than to state these interesting and highly important questions. Suggestions for the handling of some of them occur in a slightly different connection in

Chapter 16.[1] To get even appreciable results requires thought and study, ingenuity and tact. Yet such things can be done. No two persons ever do them in quite the same way, which should encourage us to believe that there are almost as many ways as persons.

Take, for example, the matter of working toward a staff of specialists, or at any rate the developing of such aptitudes, tastes, and ambitions as are discoverable in the material at hand. All these should be known, encouraged, given play and outlet whenever possible. Marked traits can be strengthened through use, a mild interest can be fanned into an enthusiasm, people can be tried out in different kinds of work. Astonishing results are sometimes achieved with very unpromising material. The qualities which mark a latent specialist are not always externally dazzling or conspicuous. There may be more failures than successes, but this does not mean that it is foolish to keep trying.

Despite the brisk cocksureness with which men in influential public places still settle (or unsettle!) weighty and intricate matters of engineering, transportation, finance, and public welfare, frequently ignoring the known presence of fully informed students or scrapping their findings and opinions—despite all this, the expert, the man who knows and knows that he knows is coming slowly into his own. In his inevitable use of books and libraries he must be met by those who speak his language and show that they understand what he is doing, otherwise he will not come again.

**5. Why reference work?** The foregoing list of traits may well strike despair to the heart of the young librarian. The accompanying program of general and professional preparation for the reference librarian, likely to be fully effective in time, at least in the largest libraries, is as long and intensive as for any other profession. Library work is paid by salaries which are small. There are no pecuniary rewards, no special prizes comparable to those that often obtain in law and medicine, and which must have some weight and attraction. The disinterested young person at the thresh-

[1] See page 244 ff.

old of the professions may be pardoned for some such self-communing as this: "Library work, let's see—pays less than lots of things taking less time to get ready—everybody says reference work's the nicest part of it—never felt keen to trade places with the lady at the desk—wonder why anyone goes in for it?"

Let us hear Dr. Bishop on the rewards of the reference librarian:

"Little glory and less reputation accrue to him. He counts his day's work done well but sees no tally of so many thousand books bought or other thousands cataloged. At his best, scholars use him, like him, thank him. At his lowest ebb, no one considers him save as a useful part of the machinery. This is the theory of his work—service, quiet, self-effacing, but not passive or unheeding. To make books useful and more used—this is his aim."[1]

Mr. Usher, too, in the last paragraph of his article[2] sums up equally in the key of blue—or is it gray? The matter may not rest thus. There is something more, and better, to be said of the attractions and compensations of reference work.

In so matter-of-fact and circumstantial an account of the daily doing of reference work as this little book, there can be conveyed no just image or conception of its interest, amounting to fascination; its thrills, rising at times to ecstasy; its infinite variety and powerful appeal.

These reactions inhere in the challenge that always attaches to a *problem;* they reflect the zest of the chase, the excitement of pursuit and capture, the revival of primeval ardors in dull, drab days. Its votaries love reference work, prefer it to any other library activity, because it is a perennial problem and pursuit. Every question may be a real adventure, a fillip to wit and quick thinking, with poignant potentialities for instruction and helpfulness.

They love it for the thrill of a solution which their reference instinct tells them is the right solution. This consummation is not invariable, to be sure, but if it marks no more than one solution in three, it is yet sufficiently rewarding to perpetuate the spell.

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[1] Bishop, W. W. Backs of books. Williams and Wilkins, 1926. p. 164.
[2] Usher, R. J. Some needs in reference work. Library Journal 51:761–66 September 15, 1926.

They love it for its triple contacts with books, folks, and system. The ideal librarian loves all three, believes in all three, and rejoices to feel that he is a part of an efficient system that brings the right books to questing people.

They love it because its aim is the studied interpretation of that intrinsic heart of the library which but reproduces in books the intrinsic heart of all cultures, all knowledge, and all times.

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On pages 481–83 is an interesting collection of definitions of a librarian.

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## Thought Questions

1. Make comparison between "Traits of a reference librarian" given here and "List of personality traits of circulation librarians" given in Flexner, *Circulation work in public libraries,* Chapter 13.
2. How would you proceed to strengthen and develop the trait of mental curiosity in a member of your reference staff in whom it was very weak?
3. How would a reference librarian be likely to benefit from synoptic courses in a number of subjects:
   (a) In a general reference department of a public library
   (b) In a special library
4. (a) What academic and professional training do you consider essential for a reference librarian?

(b) Do you agree with the ideal of preparation suggested by the author? Why?

5. Would you advise a prospective reference librarian to study cataloging? Why?
6. Section 4, *Staff qualifications* (page 239) includes a series of personnel problems which the administrator of a reference department must keep in mind. Suggest ways of meeting problem (e) and one other.
7. Write a short article expressing your own ideas of the rewards to be found in reference work.
8. On the basis of the twenty-seven traits listed in this chapter, rate yourself fairly. Have someone else rate you, and compare the two estimates.
9. In order to see how a particular trait may be exemplified in reference work, study the trait actions listed under the trait. Make as long a list as possible of other things a reference librarian could do to show the trait.
10. Reread Chapters 1, 6 and 7; list all traits mentioned or definitely suggested. How does this list compare with the list of twenty-seven traits?
11. Give your own list of the six most important traits, with ways of developing them.
12. Do you think neatness should stand at the foot of the list of traits? If so, why? If not, what other trait should trade places with it?

# Chapter 16

## THE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

1. The reference department
2. Administrative duties and policies
   (a) Who may use the reference department
   (b) Scope of book collections
   (c) Amount of free reference work
   (d) Shall the reference staff do work for pay?
   (e) Statistics
   (f) Publicity
3. Staff
4. Readers
5. Books
6. Bibliographies

This chapter treats not of the actual doing of reference work but of the organization which makes its doing easy and effective. The essence of reference work can never be formally organized but its externals may be crystallized into policies, procedures, and routines. Thus it is that, through the reference department, reference work is carried on. In this chapter all topics are discussed from the point of view of the large library, public or college, where departments are distinct.

**1. The reference department.** This is one of the usual departments in all except small libraries. In the largest libraries there often are a half dozen or more reference departments each formed to promote the better collection, organization, care, and interpretation of the materials in one subject or field.

There is an occasional large library where the organization is so loose, the central executive so strong and pervading, the policy of staff training and rotation so highly regarded and strongly entrenched, that there really is no separate reference department with a responsible head. Such a plan may be thought or appear to work well, may indeed admittedly work well in few and exceptional instances, but the weight of professional practice and opinion is strongly against it.

The formation of additional reference departments may be decided by:

(a) The outright acquisition or gradual upbuilding of an important subject collection.

(b) Change in the character of the community and consequent new demands upon the library. In this connection it may be said that *no* normal or spontaneous demand upon a library, in any subject, ever is more than a tithe of what it can be made by separate organization and competent specialized effort in a single field.

(c) Means and resources. Increased tax support, added endowments, a specially designated gift or bequest, money raised by a group of citizens representing a particular industry or profession—any of these may make possible, wise, or even imperative, a new reference department. This breaking up or dividing of the total reference work is a perfectly normal extension and deepening of it. It is merely the application, within the single library, of the logic which has resulted in so many separate special libraries. A group of reference departments (i.e., special libraries) in one building, under one administration, each in immediate charge of a person acquainted with the subject, its literature and method, will be very much more effective than the same collections apart and under as many administrations. As libraries grow in volumes they must more and more, for intensive and intelligent interpretation, be thus split up if they are to become really great and attain their utmost usefulness.

Desirable as is this development of a subject divisional organization of the reference work of a large library, it presents administrative and technical problems akin to those of the departmental system in college libraries. The chief apparent argument against it, too often a controlling one, is the cost.

So much for the department; and before dipping in detail into its duties and routines, a glance may well be given to its work-content to see what subordinate organization may be suggested. The typical reference department, when there is but one, has charge of most of the reading and all of the

study, information work, and research that is done by adults in the library building. While its activities are definitely parceled out among its staff, there is seldom need for a further formal organization save in the largest libraries, where it oftenest takes the form of the additional department or departments noted above. There is, however, a range of administrative work, and often quite enough of it, to warrant the designation of bureaus or sections of the department. Dr. Richardson[1] suggests the four divisions of (1) supervision (of books and readers), (2) consultation (aid and instruction in the use of the library), (3) bibliography, (4) research, presumably including all information found chiefly or wholly by the librarians, as well as the oversight and guidance of those doing their own search and research. These appear to cover the ground, and while they are theoretical in that they do not obtain generally even in the largest libraries, they will serve to illustrate the present point.

A real and unsettled question is: Are several reference departments in the same library best administered collectively by one reference librarian over all or each separately and independently by its own librarian? Collective administration under one head will undoubtedly achieve closer coordination among the several units, an important end and one most difficult to attain otherwise. It may be approximated—usually less than more—by meetings of the staff, of department heads, by ample telephone and messenger service, by an alert director's office, yet all these together fall far short of the results achieved by a single supervising and correlating official.

With separate administration each librarian will feel a larger and more spurring responsibility, not only for the utmost availability and use of the resources of his own department but for the certainty that every visitor to his department shall be apprized of or directed to all pertinent or related material in other departments.

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[1] Richardson, E. C. The reference department. (Manual of library economy no. 22) A.L.A., 1911. o.p.
C. F. McCombs, in his Manual no. 22 (1929), which replaces the Richardson manual, adopts essentially the same classification.

And the reference librarian "overall"—shall he be chosen for scholarship or for executive skill? It is sometimes said that the best scholars are often the poorest executives and the least amenable to administrative rules and routines. Be that as it may, certainly reference librarians either in immediate charge of a special collection or in general charge of a group of reference departments must be chosen first for scholarly attributes. There may yet be found, now and then, the man who is both scholar and successful executive and while few men can do much executive and much scholarly research at the same time, many men can effectively turn from one to the other or do much of one and a little of the other. Assuredly an executive should have scholarship enough intelligently to direct his subordinates or he will lose their respect. And it is equally true that students do not resort to libraries in search of executive ability. The scholar is rarer than the executive but he should be sought and found. He may then be supplemented by an assistant with executive capacity.

**2. Administrative duties and policies.** First of all under this caption, so necessary to stress—nay to insist upon—in departmental organization and so abhorrent to many real reference librarians, let it be said that the establishment of meticulous routines may easily be overdone and become deadening. This is especially true in the reference department. Let every reference librarian strive for the fewest possible rules, let him labor zealously to convert his chief to the same dictum, and let no rule be too sacred for frequent fracture.

This section can be little more than a partial list of the things that must be done or decided in the administration of a reference department. It is not meant that all are imperative or even desirable in any one library. Some of them will be decided by the governing board. Others will be done or decided by the chief librarian. Most of them, and rightly, will be passed on to the reference librarian, and he should be the sort of person to whom a large measure of discretion can be given with them.

(a) *Who may use the reference department?* Officially, of course, the governing board usually decides by specific enactment who may and who may not use the library. It is easy thus in the public library to set metes and bounds for the lending departments, but surely impracticable to attempt registration of reference patrons or to ask everyone if he is a card holder or a resident. The only thing the reference departments can do is to serve all comers and raise no questions of residence unless or until the matter of borrowing arises, when the visitor and his standing and credentials will be referred to the lending department. In college libraries it is common to ask or even to require introduction or identification of strangers, especially if they wish to work with manuscripts or rare books. All this applies to those who come in person. But every library gets mail reference requests. Many of these entail either considerable work or inter-library loans. This sort of reference use can be regulated and controlled, and decisions will turn on considerations of geography (county, state, or region), source (shall individuals or libraries be served; either or both), what materials shall be lent, how much time may be given to each letter, if books are lent, who pays the carriage.

Most large libraries feel that obviously serious and worth while outside requests should be met if for no better reason than that the accruing publicity and reputation are worth the work. This rules out the simultaneous flocks of letters incited by teachers or college professors in which each member of a school or class will ask for information which the nearest encyclopedia will supply, or will request a copy of the city charter. Many mail requests can be disposed of without discourtesy or unfairness by referring to local libraries, city or state.

(b) *Scope of book collections.* Every library should have a general plan and a policy in this matter. It should be reduced to writing and not forgotten. It may be altered from time to time but it will define and determine book purchases, acceptance of gifts, and emphasis upon lines of reference work. It is a matter for consideration of and action by the

trustees. Some of the principles and considerations which govern or affect library planning appear in *Library Journal* 39:747–52.[1]

(c) *Amount of free reference work to be done.* Some fairly definite rule or policy, which may be cited to visitors or correspondents, must govern this aspect of reference service. Many requests reach libraries which, if fully met, would call for a day, a week, a month, or even more of solid time. The common requests, often made with slight understanding of the work required, are for copying (a poem, a manuscript, a story, sometimes a whole book), compiling a genealogy, preparing lists of books and articles on all sorts of subjects, translating, abstracting, study and research, and answering voluminous questionnaires. Much of this obviously should be done by the inquirers or, if by the library, as paid work.[2] The question or policy to be determined is: How much shall be done gratis? If this is sometimes hard to decide it is because libraries have brought the difficulty down on their own heads. They have been too free, eager, and willing to do everything for everybody and too inattentive to showing the public how to serve itself. This particular matter is one which is not amenable to a rigid or formal rule but each case must be settled on its own merits. Successive decisions, however, will serve to fix a helpful consensus.

(d) *Shall the reference staff do work for pay?* There are strong reasons pro and con. A few libraries do not permit it on the grounds that it is foreign to the spirit and practice of a free public institution to accept money for services, that such a practice tends to abridge the amount and perhaps the kind of permissible free service, and encourages assistants to nurse requests into pay jobs, and that it is poor administration to permit members of the staff to assume outside work and extra hours. It is deemed even unethical in some libraries. There are more which permit it in emergencies or if no one else can be found to do the work, but which do not encourage such staff service. Some libraries send lists of local bibliog-

[1] Wyer, J. I. Library planning. Library Journal 39:747–52. October, 1914.
[2] See sec. (d) below.

raphers, translators, genealogists, etc., to inquirers for more extensive service than the library may properly undertake.

Most libraries, however, permit or probably would permit pay work by staff members, on their own time, of course, especially for out of town correspondents. The reference librarian may well have discretion as to details. He should know the persons, the circumstances, and should approve in advance all such service. It is often a great convenience to patrons, a member of the library staff can usually do it better than an outsider (if not, it should go to the outsider), and the opportunity to do such work not infrequently operates to keep a useful assistant and to develop specialized ability in the staff.

(e) *Statistics.* Most reference departments probably keep too many statistics. Besides those discussed below, careful figures are often kept of the number of reserves, the volumes included in them, the number of bibliographies compiled, bulletins prepared, stack permits issued, volumes sent and received on inter-library loans (sometimes duplicating circulation department records), letters received and sent, club programs prepared, clippings made, newspapers indexed, exhibits prepared, etc. It is doubtful whether statistics of this kind are worth the time and trouble involved in their preparation.

The usual statistics kept are (1) reference questions asked, (2) number of readers, (3) books used in reading rooms. The first seems the most important, and is done in the most libraries; yet even here it scarcely seems requisite to record separately the questions received by telephone, by mail, or otherwise. Miss Conner, in *Library Journal* 52:415–18,[1] shows what use can be made of a twenty-year record of one library's questions, yet for this particular purpose a single year's record might have done as well. It may be worth while saving some reference questions without a statistical record.

As to "number of readers" and "books used in reading rooms" there are practical difficulties which prevent keeping

[1] Conner, Martha. What a reference librarian should know. Library Journal 52:415–18. April 15, 1927.

entirely accurate figures and usually there are more important things to do, yet these items are commonly compiled and are possibly the nearest approach that can be made to measuring the immeasurable.

(f) *Publicity.* Publicity chiefly concerns the public library because of its universality. In other kinds of libraries the use of books is stimulated by the lecture, the lesson, the curriculum, or the events of the day's business. In the public library, however, where often neither the need nor the library's ability to meet it is suspected, there is need for systematic and varied advertising. It is not difficult to stimulate library use in almost any community.

The reference department can do it most effectively and should be ever on the alert for opportunities. One way is to buy reference books generously, not blindly of course, but calculated, as closely as is possible, to be of value to a particular industry, school, laboratory, or individual; perhaps at the invited suggestion of one of these. If no other agency has done so, it is quite in order for a library to make a systematic survey of industrial, commercial, or educational activities in a community as a basis for determining the possibilities for research work and for intelligent book selection.

There is no way to get good books used that is so effective as to have them in the library ready for use. The right user will generally find them. Sometimes they must be advertised and this may be done in many ways without sacrifice of dignity. All scientific, learned, or industrial institutions within reach of the library should be apprized of its collections and facilities, invited to use them, and urged to suggest titles for purchase. It is a commonplace among librarians that surprise is often registered at the unsuspectedly helpful books and people which have been "discovered" at the local library by some business house, or person, never before inside its doors, but suddenly driven to consult it as a last resort. The establishing of a separate department (business, technology, municipal reference) if it can be put in charge of someone whose knowledge and abilities will command respect, will often most surprisingly develop a hitherto untilled field.

Effective publicity for reference service can be had through:

(1) *The voice.* In talks to schools, clubs, conventions, committees, by the librarian; and in talks in the library by outsiders, on books, plays, travel, and music. By advertising and encouraging the use of the library telephone. The telephone number should appear on all the library's printed matter and it should be known better than that of Western Union or the local paper.
(2) *Print.* To name a few of the many forms: The annual report, the monthly bulletin, book lists, bookmarks, constant and studied newspaper publicity; signs in the chamber of commerce, hotels, other public buildings—above all, on the library building; post-cards to supposedly interested persons telling of new reference books.
(3) *Exhibits.* Both in the library and outside.

After all, however, the best publicity is *good reference work.* Satisfied visitors are the most effective library advertisers.

3. Staff.

(a) *Recruiting and appointments.* It devolves upon the chief librarian to find qualified people as needed by the several departments, and to do all the things requisite to their formal appointment and assignment to the vacant posts. Theoretically, the department heads take such persons, and as many as are handed to them, and with them proceed to do the utmost work. Actually, of course, the reference librarian is consulted all along the line. He should be encouraged to find good people, to interview those being considered, to propose such staff shifts as a vacancy nearly always suggests—in short, save for the necessary formal, official steps, practically to select his own department staff from the best material that the available funds will command.

(b) *Working conditions.* It is the reference librarian who must be immediately responsible for good air, heat, light, reasonable work schedules, comfortable equipment and work accessories within his department. This is a large order, calling especially for vigilance and patience. Librarians are sometimes called fussier than other folk. They probably are not, but if the notion has arisen because they insist on having precisely what they feel they need to work with, the unflattering imputation need give them no concern. It is neither efficient nor economical to try to standardize pens, penholders,

and pencils, but a good worker should have the conditions, tools, and accessories for his best work. The arrangements for hours, vacations, overtime, holidays, etc., will be those of the library.

(c) *Assignment of duties.* This, too, is for the reference librarian, who will, so far as possible, assign work according to pronounced traits and proved abilities. Clerical work should be done by clerks. There should be enough rotation to have a fairly instructed understudy in line for each key position. But these are administrative axioms of general application—useless to multiply here. It may add to the interest and initiative of an assistant to be charged with the development, organization, and reference contacts for a particular group of books or readers, such as clubs, teachers, debaters, genealogists, and the books they use.

There are, however, certain stated routine duties which must always be clearly and indubitably assigned to certain persons or desks. As assistants change it is helpful to keep "direction sheets" frequently revised for every position. The departing assistant is often the best reviser. Such detailed statements are helpful to newcomers. The reference librarian will have a set of them at his desk. Some of these special duties peculiar to the reference department are:

Recording daily statistics

Keeping up desk and vertical files
- Preparing new material, inserting it, weeding, etc.
- Compiling bibliographies

Supervising reserved books, reserved desks, individual study rooms.
- Unless done daily annoying confusion results

Preparing publicity
- Bulletins, exhibits, printed matter, press notices, signs

Keeping an adequate stock of blanks, forms, and supplies

Filing and indexing reference correspondence, at least that relating to questions handled

Supervising daily schedules
- Someone must be in charge to whom all changes shall be reported
- Schedule making is exhaustively described in Flexner's *Circulation work in public libraries*[1]

Preparing reports, publications, etc., for chief librarian

[1] Flexner, J. M. Circulation work in public libraries. A.L.A., 1927, p. 227–33.

Examining and checking *P.A.I.S. Bulletin, Publishers' Weekly, The Booklist, Monthly Catalog of U. S. Government Publications*

(d) *Staff improvement within the department.* The work of a large reference department is heavy, insistent, physically and mentally tiring. There is "something doing" every hour. It is a question whether it is wise or possible with advantage to undertake anything approaching formal effort toward self-improvement or increased efficiency. The training of the day's work is constant and considerable. Any added effort directed solely at staff improvement is certain to claim time and strength from work waiting to be done. There is testimony from representative libraries that, under incitement from the department head or chief librarian, formal self-improvement (on personal, not library time, of course) can easily be and often is overdone. The strain of trying to keep up, of trying to do too much reading and studying in addition to regular work, seems likely to wear out reference assistants more quickly than those in other departments.

On the other hand, many librarians do actively urge and encourage such outside effort and seem satisfied to let the fittest survive. Others make no special effort in this direction but let it be known that some such self-instruction is expected and will be recognized in promotions. Time granted for better familiarity with special libraries, private collections, the services of "sponsors for knowledge," etc., is well spent.

Neither is it easy nor desirable to arrange to let staff members take stated courses in college or professional school while doing full or part-time work for the library. Carrying water on both shoulders is sure to result in spilling some from each. Neither job will be as well taken care of as would a sole responsibility. And the temptation to overwork is insidious. Nor is it wise to use vacations for work. It is much better to take a year's leave from the library for unbroken study. From the library point of view, it is satisfactory to allow library time for school or college work only when no equally good, uninterrupted help can be had. Someone asks, "Can it not be done in moderation?" Yes, if it

is certain what moderation is. It varies greatly for different persons. Most carefully selected assistants can carry unharmed a single course of study; but not all. This section may sound too strong, but it is the observation of a long experience set down in the interest of health, happiness, and good work.

In college libraries the reference librarian should have opportunities for self-improvement, independent study and research—perhaps not as many as those of other departments of the university faculty, since their duties sometimes specifically include production as well as dissemination, but of an analogous sort.

There are, however, certain things, so much a part of any broad conception of reference work, so salutary for both the work and the doer, which might not be done at all or at least *by* all unless they were somewhat formalized and given the character of assignments. The outstanding example is the examination of new books and current journals. Some libraries display new books on certain days each week, and require staff members to spend an hour or two with them. At any rate, the reference staff above all others should have easy contact with them. If possible, this should be in the reference rooms where occasional free minutes can be given to them. The best reviews should have special attention and often the book reviews in certain journals are indexed in the reference department for general staff use. From this it is but a step to stated meetings of a part of the general staff to consider new books for purchase, a feature of which frequently is the advance assignment of titles to individuals for reading and report. Beyond this, individuals may select for personal reading books, new or old, on subjects strong in the library collections but little known to the new assistant, or on subjects in which they may be developing special knowledge.

The specialist-librarian is to be more and more in request. The wise reference librarian will make it possible to meet the preferences of ambitious and able colleagues for work in particular subjects, and both will profit.

Departmental staff meetings have a value or can be given

a value as staff training. They are difficult, almost impossible, to arrange so as to get a full attendance, but are worth while if but half the staff can come each time. Joint meetings of the circulation and reference staffs, half of each staff each week or month, are especially profitable. While the reference department staff at its meetings will usually discuss its own affairs, via questions, comparison of opinions, "yesterday's work," an outstanding new reference book, etc., such a group should occasionally hear from heads of other departments on interrelations as they arise in the day's duties. A meeting now and then for the newest members of the staff reaches those who perhaps have most to gain from such appointments.

New assistants, especially when of slight or no experience, are loath to ask questions or to seek help from staff associates. Often the material for which they are searching, sometimes floundering, has already been worked up. Beginners should be encouraged to check up on their own work and make sure they have given the best material available. They may well go over all the questions handled each day.

**4. Readers.** The supervision of readers, touching the points mentioned in this section, has little to do with reference work *per se*. The "Mark Hopkins-log" definition of a college was a striking tribute to a rare man. But multiply the single student by five hundred or five thousand and vast administrative problems intrude which must have attention before a word of teaching is done. So the essentials of reference work are no more than many inquirers, a librarian, and a collection of books. But with half a million books in a building to which all the world is invited and to which thousands resort annually, administrative problems again loom large. Before real reference work can be begun or maintained at its best, day after day, forever, there must be initial and continuing consideration of the administrative aspects of the project. There must be plan, program, setting, machinery, resulting in at least a minimum of organization, the chief factors of which are building, books, staff, and readers.

Perhaps fewer of these administrative aspects relate to readers than to the other factors. Readers do not belong to

a library. They are their own bosses and can not, with the same assurance as books and staff, be welded into an organization and made amenable to by-laws and rules. In fact, those libraries are well advised that make the fewest possible rules for the reference department. If a few rather formal decisions recorded somewhere in the background are felt to be indispensable, touching such matters as stack and shelf privileges, use of telephone, theft and mutilation (much better left to laws and ordinances), dogs, children, silence, and ink in the reference rooms, they should be kept as dark as possible from visitors. Like the earliest Homeric tales they may be orally transmitted from generation to generation through the staff but never be allowed to appear in print, to be posted in the library, or to be inadvertently quoted verbatim by attendants.

The main thing with readers is to make them feel at home, at least up to the point of eating and sleeping in the library. As freshmen are now oriented in a friendly, advance "first week" at college, so new library readers should be similarly welcomed by a pleasant person at the first desk encountered, personal and patient help with the catalog, printed aids in using the books and different rooms and collections, and an unfailing, informed, and friendly courtesy as nearly perfect as it is given to mortals to produce. Some one asks "Is there a model set of rules for the supervision of readers?" Heavens! It is to be hoped not. Principles of reading room administration there may be. But "Code of Rules?" Never!

**5. Books.**

(a) *Library housekeeping.* Reference books are useless unless they can be found when needed. The main part of library housekeeping is to keep books not in use off the tables, desks, chairs, floors, ledges, trucks, and return shelves; and to have them on the shelves, each where it belongs. This is a large order, an endless job never fully attainable, of first importance to every department, especially important to the reference department. In large libraries it is usually done by the shelf department, though the reference department often is responsible for all books shelved in its public rooms, leaving

to the shelf department the care of books in the stacks. To achieve best results, some department or person must be definitely responsible for every part of the library reading rooms, stacks, reserve collections, seminar collections, and new books.

There are, of course, the books charged to borrowers, to other desks in the building, to reserves, to bindery, etc. It is assumed that wherever these loan records are kept they will be accurate and up to the minute for the reference department will use them constantly. There are always, unhappily, the books missing but charged to nobody, nowhere. There are those spirited away by the library staff, sometimes by seasoned members, who will commit the unpardonable sin of taking a book from the shelf to another room, floor, or desk without having it charged. Such offenders are beyond benefit of clergy.

The lending of books from restricted reference collections is a matter so variously affected by such factors as local conditions, who wants the book, the apparent urgency or importance of the call, the book itself, how long desired, library reputation of would-be borrower, that each library must act for itself. Rules are futile. The reference librarian should decide or delegate such power.

Nor is it enough to see that all books are on the shelves. The shelves must be regularly read for misplacements, in public rooms frequently, in the stacks oftener than is generally thought necessary or done. This work in the reading rooms is good for the newest reference assistants. They thus quickly become acquainted with the library classification and the correct arrangement of books by class and book numbers. They learn the authors and titles of books in the reference collections, the location and names of the books most used, and above all the fact that a book misplaced is practically lost.

Library housekeeping in the reference department includes more than the books. Tables, chairs, and equipment constantly need "straightening up"—let those who "doubt whether the public ever uses the card catalog" contemplate the number of card trays that are taken out and left out or

wrongly replaced. An amazing variety of personal property, much of it sheer litter, is left in all reading rooms, and librarians have always to keep an eye out for it and a hand ready to remove it. Book supports require a discouraging amount of attention. In a hundred ways tidiness must vigilantly be conserved.

(b) *Reserves.* A distinctive part of reference room administration is the assembling of small collections of books on single subjects for individual students, or for a special group (e.g., a club, class, or debating squad) temporarily marked so that they may be kept together in a designated place during the period of special use. This "reserving" of books has assumed such proportions in college libraries that often one great reading room is wholly used for it. The practice is less prevalent in public libraries, though if it grows, as seems natural to forecast, such libraries will do well to follow the college library: keep all reserves behind a desk, practically under lock and key, give them out only for use in the room for stated periods and on personal signature of borrower. At present, public libraries merely get the books together, mark them as reserved for such a class or group, and stop there. Anybody may use them or borrow them for home use if insistent and thus the main purpose, a special service to a particular group, is not fully safe-guarded or achieved. But what about this "main purpose?" Will it square with the ideals and obligations of the free public library? Does it not play favorites? Should any books be "reserved" for a single individual or group (any more than they should be included in "pay duplicate" collections) unless there are other copies available? These questions apply only to public libraries. College and school libraries exist primarily for the students and faculties. They are owned by and for the use of the institutions which properly may do with the book what best serves their constituents. But the public library is owned by the people.

It is quite legitimate and fair, of course, to restrict the use or circulation of any book in the interest of its largest and easiest use by all. Books reserved for contests, current events,

plays, lectures, holidays, to illustrate an exhibit or bulletin, and accessible to all comers (even though temporarily withheld from circulation) are exempt from the strictures intimated above. If, therefore, reserves are operated with strict impartiality, if it is understood that no reserve holds against other requests and that reserving books is a convenience, an accommodation, an effort to combine fairness and greatest use, and that it is not meant to confer a monopoly, there can then be no objection to their largest possible use; and they will not only effect a fairer and wider use of books than any other plan but will also save time for the staff, draw attention sharply to special subjects, and stimulate the use of books.

Most libraries are fairly conservative in establishing reserves. Trivial or exclusive requests are usually declined. Quick reference books and bound periodicals are seldom used in reserves because they usually do not circulate but theoretically are available at all times. Some libraries will use only one copy of a book, others will include every available copy and borrow others. The "fairness" rather questioned above would suggest reserving but one copy. The difficult decisions are those touching the circulation of reserved books. Should books on loan be recalled to be reserved for a club or class? The touchstone is the phrase cited above: "The largest and easiest use by all."

If reserves are numerous, the technique should be well studied and precisely carried out. Especially should every reserved book be so marked that, during the reserve period, it will get back to its temporary place and be charged so that its whereabouts may be known instantly when sought.[1]

The subject of reserves is treated at some length in section 3, Chapter 12,[2] which should be read in connection with the present section.

**6. Bibliographies.** In this section bibliographies are discussed solely as an item in the organized work of the reference department. Their character, varieties, study points,

[1] See also Flexner, J. M. Circulation work in public libraries. A.L.A., 1927. p. 115.
[2] See page 196.

and reference uses are treated in section 4, Chapter 2.[1] There remain for consideration here the making, collecting, and keeping arranged for quick and easy reference use the slight, fugitive, or hidden bibliographies, original and printed, which have neither been classified and shelved as separate items nor brought out by analytic entries in the catalog.

The making of lists of books, pamphlets, and periodical articles is a recognized and inevitable part of library work, mostly done in the reference departments. It is desirable and important to know how to make bibliographies accurately, in good form, and with a minimum waste of time.

While bibliography *using* is more vital to good reference work than is bibliography *making,* yet bibliographies must be made before they can be used. Too many (made by authors and publishers doubtless) are hard to use after they are made but there is no good excuse for a poor bibliography from a reference librarian. A detailed account of how to make good bibliographies is neither necessary nor quite appropriate here. Such instructions are in print and the best of them are grouped in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

When bibliographies are prepared for readers, correspondents, bulletin, or debate use, extra copies should be made for the reference file. Wilson, Faxon, Bowker (the chief bibliography publishers), *The Booklist,* lists of publications by the American Library Association, *P.A.I.S. Bulletin,* and similar sources should regularly be scanned for new material. A five cent item may often be more useful to a library than a five dollar one. New incoming pamphlets should be examined and the reference staff will ever be alert for notices, allusions, or clues which through begging or purchase may result in new book lists or reference aids.

Quite as important as making them is keeping the bibliographies accessible after they are made. They should regularly and systematically be merged into some workable arrangement, usually alphabetically by subject, and cared for as carefully as the vertical file collections. All of the foregoing should be made part of definitely assigned routines to

[1] See page 25.

insure the continuity and completeness of this useful adjunct to the major reference collections.

## Bibliography

It is interesting to note that in the last edition of Cannons' *Bibliography of library economy,*[1] section T, The Reference Department fills but five pages, while those on loan, cataloging, classification, and book selection fill fourteen, thirty-seven, twenty, and twenty-nine respectively.

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## THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Formulate three important principles of reading room administration.
2. What are the pros and cons of reference department staff meetings?
3. Should press publicity be given to the interesting reference questions asked at libraries? Give reasons.
4. Prepare a statement of the work statistics which should be kept by a large reference department. Why should each be kept?
5. In what ways does reference service gain through organization:
   (a) As one department
   (b) As a coordinated group of separate departments
6. Select a public library having no special reference departments, and survey the service it gives. On the basis of this study and your knowledge of the community, determine what special departments will logically develop as the library grows. Or can you give reasons why it is better to have no formal reference department?
7. What duties of reference work would you add to those listed in section 2?
8. What specific advantages and disadvantages result when a reference staff member takes courses in a college or professional school? Consider these from the point of view of:
   (a) The staff member
   (b) The library
9. Would you advocate compiling a set of directions for the guidance of staff members in their work in the reference department? Why?
10. What would you include in such a set of directions?
11. How would you regulate the use of books reserved for a special group of people? Give reasons.
12. Which of the following reports on reference work would you consider necessary:
    (a) Weekly statistical report
    (b) Monthly report
    (c) Annual report
    (d) Report on special conditions

    Why?
13. Outline an annual report for the reference department of a medium sized public library.
14. Plan a program for a reference department staff meeting.
15. Make a weekly schedule for a reference staff of four members, taking account of special work (indexing, etc.), of regular desk work, and of left-over work, the reference room to be open nine hours daily.

# Chapter 17

## INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMITY

1. How to foster unity
2. Librarian's office
3. Order department
4. Catalog department
5. Circulation department
6. Shelf department
7. All reference departments

It is an administrative commonplace that, in a departmentally organized library, there must be close and cordial cooperation between the several units. This is true in the simplest organization with the fewest departments, and its necessity and importance increase in geometric progression with the number of departments. It is emphatically and peculiarly so with reference work, because after the usual departments (circulation, order, cataloging, children's, and reference) have been set up, additional administrative units nearly always are of a reference character (art, technology, business, government, documents, periodicals). Such departmental differentiation, under specialist guidance, becomes necessary as libraries grow, if their collections are to be of the most use and value. Yet this very expert interpretation through departments reveals almost at once certain administrative dangers, or at least drawbacks, which tend toward several-separate libraries instead of one-great-library. The essential articulation which shall make certain that a student approaching any department will get into touch with the resources of all departments, is difficult to achieve and maintain.

Department heads constantly at work in one field, immersed in a single subject or small group of related subjects, tend unconsciously to become either narrow, and thus forgetful of the relations of their subjects with other subjects, or waterlogged, and so unable to float easily in another element. Jealousy or overweening ambition is not unknown, and there results either a reluctance to refer students to other departments or an attempt to interpret an alien subject or material

better known to a colleague. Again, a new, enthusiastic, inventive department head, or one over-inclined to believe himself supreme in his own domain, may change or disregard wholesome general policies or practices without preliminary conference or consent.

1. **How to foster unity.** There are ways, capable of verbal statement, in which interdepartmental comity and coordination may be increased.

(a) By encouraging each department to know a great deal about the work, the special collections, and tools of every other department. This may come, among other ways, from frequent meetings of staff and department heads with chances for informal discussion, careful reading of the annual report, a distribution of current publicity to each department, a staff journal, a staff club, talks by heads of departments explaining their work.

(b) By a somewhat fluid staff-service policy. This takes care of itself in small libraries, where department lines are not strictly drawn and where each person is likely to be called on often for any work. Rotation becomes increasingly difficult with large and highly organized staffs, where the unchecked tendency of department heads is to regard each assistant as a "fixed star" in his particular portion of the library heavens, and to feel or act as though the loss or the lending of even the least of them would upset the stellar equilibrium of the entire firmament. Newark (New Jersey), for example, may practice with success an itinerating personnel policy; Providence (Rhode Island) may believe experience in another department indispensable for reference service; Yale University may be sure that none should be a reference librarian who has not previously cataloged; yet all this weighty testimony does not prevent the concededly excellent policy of staff rotation from being more honored in the breach than in the observance. In most libraries it seems to be done only in emergencies.

(c) By having knowledge of the language abilities (who, e.g., knows Russian or Choctaw); professional specialties, such as copyright or income taxation; hobbies (who is known

to collect American pewter or Japanese prints); reading interests; travels; unusual experiences, of staff members. This knowledge is sometimes acquired through a formal survey or questionnaire, sometimes from staff records, but best and oftenest by absorption and remembering.

(d) By having every member of the library's training class (from which its staff is chiefly recruited) do practice work in every department. Where there is no training class, it will be advantageous, whenever possible, to add to the reference staff only those who have worked in other parts of the library.

(e) By appointing department heads and staff members with an eye to human qualities as well as technical competence.

(f) By scheduling every member of the reference staff for one hour weekly with the new books and magazines set aside for general staff examination.

(g) By routing certain new journals regularly to department heads.

It is now in order to consider how the most effective cooperation may be achieved between the reference department and every other. Each department will be taken up separately, beginning with the executive office.

**2. Librarian's office.** The personnel routines of the executive office may be effective in seeing that the various departments handle the items of incoming business for which they are best equipped. This is true of mail, and there is also much local business that comes over the telephone and from those who call first at the librarian's office. The executive staff should know most about the work and abilities of every person and department. It is thus best equipped to arrange for the best service, to break letters among different departments, and often to add a suggestion or bit of information not so likely to be known elsewhere. In urgent cases some of this work can be done by telephone, but a formal memorandum is usually better, both for record and in locating responsibility or neglect.

So important is this focal work that many large libraries ask that all incoming mail be addressed to the library or librarian so that it may be assigned by and if necessary followed

up from one office. It is equally helpful to have an extra carbon of every reference department letter sent daily to the librarian's office, so that he may see how completely and competently correspondents are served. Even though the originals have gone, a prompt follow-up is possible if there have been errors or omissions.

Reference questions addressed to one department or individual should often be referred to another department better equipped to answer them, and every department head should be watchful to see that this is done.

The executive office usually handles publicity, and it is through this channel that the reference department will submit the considerable interesting news matter originating there.

**3. Order department.** The wide-awake reference department constantly will be recommending and suggesting items for purchase, begging, or replacement, as described in Chapter 4.[1] In this it will be careful to use the blanks and forms and to follow the procedure furnished and suggested by the order department. Some order departments desire only an affirmative indication on a prospectus, leaflet, or circular, or some indication against catalog or book list items. Others prefer or require the reference department to make out order slips and perhaps to initial them, indicating that titles requested are not now noted in the library catalog. In requesting gifts, procedure differs, although reports show that in most libraries the order department (and not the reference department) handles "begs" from all sources. This seems much more businesslike and sensible, preventing duplication of work and material and assuring systematic handling of requests.

The chief interest of the reference department in the order department, however, is to have books ordered and when received rushed through for use. The order department should be equally zealous to do its part in this effort to render quick service, even to the point now and then of disregarding generally wholesome and necessary routines. There is no good reason for books not being used in special

[1] See page 62 ff.

cases as soon as they have been checked on the bills, examined, and marked for ownership, always, of course, with the proviso (which the reference department should faithfully carry out) that they are to be returned to a certain desk for completion of records as soon as the "special" use is over.

In passing titles on to the order department for acquisition, it is helpful to note all information available (even though that from patrons is likely to be wrong or scanty) from reviews, individuals, letters, requests, and lists from which the titles are gleaned. This is especially true as to addresses of publishers, authors, distributors, that are outside ordinary trade channels.

The order department owes to the reference department (indeed to all the public departments) such clear, precise, and up-to-date records of the receipt and whereabouts of serials as shall be as quickly understood by any member of the library staff who uses them as by the clerk who makes the records. It should be possible to know at once which is the last number received of a journal, annual, or continuation title of any kind, where it should be found during that inchoate and elusive period between receipt as an unbound part and its triumphant appearance, bound and definitive, at the right-hand end of the proper set, and when another number or volume may be expected.

In most libraries the reference department is open nearly twice as many hours as the catalog or order department. For this reason the zealous reference assistant, hard pressed by an insistent public, is tempted to help himself to books received but not ready for public use. It is possible to reach an understanding and administer a procedure which will permit, for instance, having a cataloger on duty evenings. But any such arrangement will require punctilious and invariable observance of treaty stipulations by the reference staff, which has only itself to blame if its failure to respect them moves outraged and long-suffering order and catalog librarians to abrogate all treaties and lock up their books at night.

**4. Catalog department.** Reference librarians either want books cataloged with the utmost speed, or a working arrange-

ment allowing them to take any book, at any time, from any point, in its pre-public routines. They are sometimes too insistent on quick cataloging. They forget that the non-public departments are, in some libraries, subject to frequent calls to help man the reference and circulation departments, regardless of pressure from their own work. These direct public-service departments seldom are able to resign some of their own people to relieve the pressure which they have themselves exerted upon the catalog department. Catalogers usually will rush new books or those indicated by the reference department as needed at once, and if the reference staff is careful in its "rush" designations, and the two staffs interchange sufficiently to achieve each other's point of view, a *modus vivendi* is assured.

There are other forms of cooperation, too, in which staff interchange between these two departments plays a leading part.

(a) Are catalogers the best persons to explain the use of the catalog? This is a nice question which can not here be argued to a conclusion. There are catalogers and catalogers, and it seems reasonable that those most like the best reference librarians should have strong "points" for catalog-attendants and tutors to the reference public. Any cataloger will be a better one for such experience, and no policy or practice which will result in a better catalog may be lightly dismissed by the reference librarian. When catalogers have done their very best cataloging, someone, and perhaps it should be one of the catalogers, will still have to help or placate perplexed and floundering users of their cards. Whoever acts as public interpreter of the catalog is sure to glean many comments, observations, and ideas which should be relayed to the catalog department, and a cataloger should glean more and with more profit than anyone else.

(b) Every catalog department will expect and should solicit from the reference department suggestions touching the choice, revision, and use of subject headings. Some will be helpful and feasible, some impossible, others of dubious utility, but no cataloger will be a good one very long who ignores

this by-product of reference work. A study of the reference questions as asked is often helpful in determining subject headings. Probably it is not too much to say that no new cataloging rules, no new policy or plan affecting its form or principle, should be adopted without consultation with the reference department.

Especially in the matter of new or better cross-references, author as well as subject, is the use of the catalog by both public and staff sure to be fruitful. Every caption vainly sought by reader or assistant may yield a helpful reference.

(c) In classification, too, there will be the closest cooperation. The reference staff will now and then volunteer class numbers for new books; they will quite as often be consulted by the classifier. And of course expansions, adaptations, and changes in schedules, necessary in all large libraries, will always follow conferences of the catalog department with the public departments likely to be affected. Staff interchange is profitable and illuminating at this point, for the reference worker, who has a right to expect certain rather accurate subject groupings on the shelves, gets a very different reaction to classification from the remote, closet classifier who must consider books singly as they arrive. It is the entirely proper province of the reference librarian politely, but pointedly if necessary, to question the validity, or expediency, of any class number, and the rightminded classifier will welcome such intimations or objections unless they become chronic and cantankerous. Nor will he resent a request from the reference librarian of a special collection or department, to check all class numbers assigned by the classifier before they are finally decided upon. This practice should be especially worth while in subjects about which the reference staff admittedly know more than the classifier.

(d) Well-judged analytical cataloging is of incalculable value to study and research. The soundest and best-informed opinion as to what books or sets are most worth analysis will come from the reference department. The catalogers will scarcely ever be able to do all analysis proposed, but the reference department may well have the decision as to titles

for first treatment. In some libraries such work is done by the reference staff as "pick-up" work. That such a thing is possible would seem to suggest the wisdom of a transfer of help from reference to catalog department. In a few libraries (chiefly, we suspect, where the reference librarian is a former cataloger) the reference assistants tentatively assign class numbers and subject headings to the new books. This work is revised in the catalog department, and seems duplicating, but may be justified as acquainting the reference staff with the new books, certainly a most desirable result. That the plan is not in wider vogue suggests that it is not agreeable to the two departments, perhaps slowing up the preparation of new books. It probably is wiser practice not to mix duties in this way. The reference department does, however, do its own classifying and cataloging of the rather ephemeral vertical file material which is now such a staple in reference work. This is more fully described in Chapter 4, sections 7, 8, and 9.[1]

*Summary.* In discussing these several points, it is impossible to over-emphasize the inseparableness of the catalog and reference departments. No reference work can be successful unless the books are intelligently and carefully classified and exhaustively and competently cataloged. The most searching test of this work is its use by the reference staff and the public, of which the reference staff is the observer and reporter. That this test may be met with credit, the staffs, and especially the chiefs, of both departments must work harmoniously. Each has a large share if the best results are to be had.

**5. Circulation department.** This section will treat almost wholly of the public library, where the circulation department usually is the busiest and most populous department and where relations between the reference and the other principal public-service departments are numerous and should be very close. So close are these relations and in some phases so similar in kind, if not in degree, that it is difficult to avoid, if not precisely duplication, at least a confusion of function.

[1] See page 70 ff.

This is well illustrated by the information desk, a sort of connecting link between circulation and reference departments in the larger libraries. From the brief description of it in Chapter 7,[1] it is at once apparent how close together are these two departments.

To administer the large circulating-reference type of library with satisfaction to business men, technologists, artists, teachers, etc., requires individual attendants familiar with such subjects in both reference and circulating departments, a doubtfully practicable expedient. Where circulating and reference books are combined according to subject, it is possible to create staffs of good general assistants with college and library-school training, which come to give intelligent and sympathetic expert service. It restores to the large library much of the speed and ease of operation associated with the well-managed small library. In a few of the largest public libraries, extreme subject departmentalization of reference work is joined to the circulation function, resulting in a number of quasi-separate special libraries, each meeting all reference and lending requests in its well-defined field. It remains to be seen how the public will relish and react to this breaking up the library into separate rooms and collections, especially when this carries with it a similar splitting up of the public's most popular privilege of easy borrowing for home use. It is too soon to tell whether the two functions, heretofore (and especially abroad) regarded as quite distinct, will flourish and develop as fast and as far together as apart.[2] If they do, the two departments may be so reorganized in our larger libraries as to carry their operations still further from the British extreme of entire separateness. These observations apply of course only to those large public libraries the chief function of which, in common thought, is lending. In college, school, special, and reference libraries, the lending

[1] See page 116 ff.

[2] In the Cleveland public library the so-called "divisional system" with circulating and reference material on each broad subject kept together and operated as a unit with a coordinating General Reference Division has been in successful use for fifteen years. Several libraries have adopted or are planning new buildings to conform to a similar plan of administration. The present trend would seem to be in the direction of obliterating rigid lines of demarcation between circulating and reference material and administration.

function, when it exists at all, is so incidental that it does not figure in the present considerations. In most public libraries, too, taking the small with the large, department lines are either unknown or loosely drawn, and the entire staff acts pretty much as for one great department.

Such thoroughgoing merging of circulation and reference work in every or any department does not alter the nature of the latter except to intensify and specialize it, and thus make more imperative the need, as heads of such departments, for those who are experts in the single field and are trained librarians as well.

Leaving this phase of current library development, there are a host of minor, often administrative, relations existing and arising between the two departments when, as is usual, they are distinct. Some of the most typical or troublesome will be noted.

(a) *Lending "R" books.* Books reserved in reference collections will often be in request for home use, for interlibrary loans, for special use in other departments. Two questions must be answered at once. What reference books may be lent, and on what terms? Where shall the loan records be kept? The first is the more puzzling. The better the reference librarian, the more books will he try to have marked "R," and the oftener they will be sought for other uses. There are still many libraries where the scriptural needle's eye is a broad highway beside the borrowing of an "R" book, yet library practice tends, and rightly, toward lending overnight, or for twenty-four hours, any book in the building if the need or occasion shall be deemed sufficient. The decision rests usually with the reference librarian, although the details in too many libraries are hedged about with an amazing number of petty rules.

A successful reference librarian comments on the foregoing paragraph as follows and effectively presents the extreme reference point of view.

"To whatever extent you lend 'R' books (however worthy the motive) you weaken reference work. A reference department, open more than 80 hours a week, can not long maintain the full integrity of its reference service if it lends many books, even overnight. When

a patron makes an evening trip of 50 miles to consult material which he knows is reference, and which he himself would not expect to borrow, he has legitimate ground for complaint if he finds the material out 'overnight.' No librarian can accurately predict what will be called for; frequently the very cause which inspires the request to borrow, will simultaneously stimulate several desires to consult. In a gratifying number of cases, lending material can be substituted to serve the patron who wants to borrow 'R' material, and in many other cases photostatic service is indicated. The reference department which lends freely is slowly undermining its reputation for effective service."

Charges may be made in the reference department but they should be filed at the circulation desk so that all loan records may be handled, notified, renewed, etc., in one place. "R" books are usually charged on a card of distinctive color and often a duplicate charge is kept by or sent to the reference department, so that it may know where its missing books are. Charges among the different departments and branches are often kept in an inter-loan file and thus separate from the ordinary charges for home use. The circulation department should be advised of all rules touching the lending of reference materials and of changes in them as made.

Again space is gladly given for a more rigid rule and practice as expressed by the librarian quoted just above.

"I should feel much safer to have no provision for charging, and, in the (rare) cases where an 'R' book *is* charged, to ignore the regular lending card, and strongly impress on the borrower the fact that no charging system is provided because such material is not supposed to be charged, and that the case is irregular. Posted notices that 'R' books can *not* be borrowed will afford the reference librarian a more comfortable backing than will a special card which indicates that they may be borrowed.

"Furthermore I should prefer to have the 'loan' record of 'R' material kept and controlled at the reference desk. Renewal or extension should not be decided elsewhere."

(b) *Written procedure.* In many libraries the relations between these two departments on all specific points are reduced to writing, and form part of the official staff instructions. Illustrations of this are the following, from the code book of an American public library:

"Fiction. Requests for fiction, either author or title, are answered at the circulation desk. Information concerning fiction on a subject,

character study, description of places, historical periods, etc., are referred to reference department."

"Short story. If author or title is known, a short story request is answered by the circulation desk. If story is not found, the question is then referred to reference department, where short story indexes are kept."

(c) *New books.* The circulation and reference departments are the two that most need to see and know the books that are being currently added to the library, especially those just published. This can best be done by some mutual understanding or routine. Various plans to achieve this acquaintance in more than a perfunctory way are in vogue in libraries. There are stated meetings of committees, clubs, or department heads; there are stated places where new books will be displayed for so many days; there are requirements that every staff member shall spend a certain time each week with the new books (odd that this must be *required*—one would fancy that reference librarians would have to be held back by precisely the opposite requirement!); the reference and circulation staffs are required to examine, often to index, designated reviews. The point is that this is emphatically a matter for cooperation.

**6. Shelf department.** The shelf department more than any other proves the truth of the axiom "All are needed by each one." Indeed, it might almost be said that this is the one department that is most needed by every other. Certain it is that a cessation or blockade of its work stops all wheels surely and suddenly.

The reference department must feel and acknowledge this dependence more than any other. The circulation department has many of its books within its immediate quarters. Its largest turnover is independent of the stacks. The reference department, however, no matter how large or well chosen its "R" collection, is constantly levying upon material everywhere, and especially in the great core of the library which is the special concern of the shelf department and the common hunting ground for all departments. This it does in two ways—by taking from or returning to the stack books used in the quasi-permanent "R" collection, and by taking books

from stack to reference rooms for short periods, an hour, a day, or a week.

All changes of "R" books require important changes of markings on labels, plates, shelf-list, and catalog cards. The reference librarian must not forget to give the cataloger a chance to do this, nor will he omit to consult other departments before moving books from stack to the "R" collection.

In the case of temporary removals from the stack a charge should be made to the reference department which is canceled when the book is replaced.

The reference department can appreciably lighten the work of the shelf department in keeping all books where they should be when not in use—by having constantly in mind the shelf rules and routines, by judicious granting of stack permits, by care in charging out reference material, by care in taking books from the shelves, and (occasionally) replacing them, so as not to disturb the order, the book-supports, or the general good housekeeping.

**7. All reference departments.** Constantly, the work of some student using the general reference department leads to another department—in university libraries to a departmental collection, or to another library in the same city. Shall the new material be brought to the student, or shall he be sent to it? There are two sides to every such question. The circumstances of each case must decide it.

Each department or library presumably knows its own books best and should be allowed to interpret them and prescribe their use in its own way. Students will usually get more, equally competent service conceded, from using one or a dozen books in their own homes. Readers usually are moved more easily and quickly than books.

On the other hand, if a student is in the midst of a piece of work, established in one place, surrounded with books, notes, etc., and the reference assistant is in touch with his aims, materials, and line of work, there may often be loss and interruption in removal. The following decision, reached after interdepartment conference, shows the practice of one large American library.

"It was agreed that each department should carry through to completion all questions on subjects within its own scope, using resources of other departments as well as its own. Special phases of a question, however, which call for special familiarity with a different line of material, are to be referred to the other department involved. . . . The above provisions are understood to include the use of the document collection by assistants of the department originally handling the question, and it is expected that under ordinary circumstances assistants will go to the material or send the page of their own department rather than ask that it be sent to them."

When a reader is sent to another department or building, it is well to provide personal escort or to telephone ahead, to be sure that the desired book is available and will be ready when he arrives. A note of introduction is sometimes in order, or at least the transfer card which many libraries use.

R. J. Usher, in *Library Journal* 51:766, sums up this topic as it appears to him, thus:

"The reference librarian will be misunderstood by his fellow workers in the periodical and order departments, who will be unable to understand the reasons for repeated purchases of what seems ephemeral material. He will be disliked by catalogers and classifiers for insisting upon the addition of a greater number of analytical entries to the public catalog. The entire staff concerned with the forwarding of books will resent his inquisitive ways and his interruption of tasks. But the public, his master, who must and will be served, will appreciate his efforts."[1]

Isn't this just a bit pessimistic? Change the "wills" to "may," and it will be nearer the truth. Certainly the zealous reference librarian must have so much to do and say in every other department that he runs grave risk of the displeasure Mr. Usher assumes. Let us hope he will be a diplomat as well as a scholar, and do it all without disturbing the *entente cordiale*.

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[1] Usher, R. J. Some needs in reference work. Library Journal 51:761–66. September 15, 1926.

Describes and emphasizes the interrelations of catalog and reference departments. Equally apt and entertaining remarks on catalogers by a reference librarian (Andrew Keogh) precede the above title. The ensuing discussion is also worth while.

## Thought Questions

1. Is it likely that chief librarians prefer as head of the reference department a person who believes his department is the most important in the library and who works hard to make it so, who will do all he can to get the best quarters and the best people for it, who is a driver, a pusher, a go-getter, *or* a person who feels that all departments are of equal importance, who asks or urges nothing that seems likely to deprive any other department, whose chief concern is to do good work with the facilities afforded him? Why?
2. In a large library with several reference departments, should inquirers be sent or taken to the department which seems certain to serve them best, or should the books needed be brought? Why?
3. If rotation between the reference staff and that of one other department can be arranged, which department would offer the best combination? Give reasons.
4. What factors make for successful staff rotation? Why?
5. What advantages do you see in combining the reference and circulation functions in a public library? How far does the combination seem practicable?
6. Why is it important that a reference librarian know the library as a whole?
7. How would you organize the housekeeping of a reference department in a library having no separate shelf department?
8. Outline a plan for the circulation of reference material, taking advantage of the circulation department's organization for follow-up work.
9. Under what circumstances would you relax the rule prohibiting the circulation of reference books? Why?
10. Discuss the relations to be desired between a central reference department and
    (a) Other departments of the library
    (b) Branch libraries
    (c) The public
11. If assigned to a public library branch for reference work, how would you proceed to acquaint yourself with its resources?

# Chapter 18

## TRAINING THE PUBLIC

1. **The need for training in the use of books and libraries**
2. **Formal instruction in schools and colleges**
3. **Formal instruction in public libraries**
4. **Printed aids to library use**

**1. The need for training in the use of books and libraries.** One man spends an hour in a library fumbling catalogs and lists or wandering confusedly among the books, when all he wants is the date of the battle of Marathon. Another man goes straight to any of a half-dozen books that he knows will tell him; jots it down and in three minutes is gone. Unhappily, the second man is so much rarer as to compel ready agreement with Dr. Learned's remark, "The daily losses in energy and material that result from sheer ignorance on the part of otherwise intelligent persons of how to avail themselves of the contents of books must be colossal beyond all calculation."

The organization of a library, especially a large one, is necessarily complex. Few who come for information can find it without help. This is also true of other public service agencies such as railroads, hotels, colleges, and schools. The more one knows about them the easier they are to use with the utmost benefit and speed. All of them go to great pains to make use easy, not alone by careful selection and training of employees, but by personal and printed information and suggestions to patrons. Some colleges give an entire week in advance of regular sessions to "orienting" freshmen. Many commercial and some welfare public service organizations have formal talks, demonstrations, and exhibits. Some of these methods are pure publicity, but others definitely aim at informing the public of its facilities and opportunities, and explaining how best to use them. Both objectives are com-

mendable. All this is in the direction of self-help, salutary for both sides in ways too obvious to require recital.

Libraries have long been doing such work. Its aggregate is considerable, but so far as it affects the studious use of books it is spread out thin and, save in school and college libraries, is sporadic, scrappy, and notable neither for originality nor results. Much more and better work of this sort can and will be done. Perhaps it is more difficult for libraries than for hotels, railroads, or even colleges. With them the objectives are more definite—the processes and results more clearly visualized in advance. In schools and colleges, group segregation, formal curricula, and standardized routines lend themselves to instruction in self-help much better than does the miscellaneous, individual, casual clientele of public libraries.

Work of this sort may well be done in all departments of a library. This chapter, however, will consider only the reference department, in a summary of what is now being done in libraries of different types to enable patrons better to help themselves in fact-finding, study, and research. Other pertinent and feasible possibilities will be suggested.

Training in self-help is part of the warp and woof of any tenable theory of reference work. It goes hand in hand with the utmost personal service. However complex or full of detail library work may be or seem, it is most so to librarians. It is not—it need never be—so complicated to others. The essential things an outsider needs to know to make effective use of the reference department are few and simple when compared with constructing a transcontinental itinerary from the *Railway guide* or a semester time schedule from the college catalog and table of classes. While a card catalog is assuredly a complex and delicate instrument, it should be most so to its makers. Many libraries now distribute library handbooks explaining the arrangement of rooms and collections, the relation of classification marks and call numbers, what can be learned from the catalog and how, the process of getting a book, and similar details. A careful reading of a clear handbook of this sort, especially when accompanied by a concrete

search, should equip a reasonably intelligent patron with sufficient knowledge to serve himself with a speed and satisfaction that will increase with practice. And if, in addition, he will read carefully the signs on shelves, in book rooms, and around the catalog, the instruction cards in the catalog and the directions on call slips, he will shortly become so proficient as inevitably to attract notice as good material for the next apprentice class! And if the library should in addition (as very few libraries do), on one evening a week for a specified time, offer to its public a short talk on the use of its different departments, with generous graphic accompaniment of film, stereopticon, blackboard, poster, etc., the reading of the manual would be clarified and clinched, and much time and repetition of instruction saved to the staff.

The kind and amount of instruction that can be given varies greatly in different types of libraries. Colleges and high schools have definite, limited, and mainly studious constituencies engaged in formal and specific educational programs in which the library of necessity plays a considerable part. It is reasonable and easy to segregate students for library instruction, to provide a realistic laboratory, and to require the work.

**2. Formal instruction in schools and colleges** is now regularly given to teachers and students. This has all grown up within the last thirty years; most of it in twenty. The initiative has always come from librarians, as has probably the larger part of the instruction, though, as will later appear, they have drawn upon other teachers and have worked with and through them in both schools and colleges. This organized instruction from grade school to university is beginning to have a certain unity and logical progression. It is yet far, however, from being perfectly articulated and appears to repeat somewhat, or to be likely to do so, if some clear understanding be not shortly reached as to the precise content and method of the work given respectively in the grades, the high school, and the college.

(a) *To teachers.* Or, more exactly, to *prospective* teachers, for this work is given in normal schools and teachers colleges. Its aim is to multiply, exalt, and fructify good books

in schools. This is attempted by teaching the teachers what books should signify in the school room and in the life of every boy and girl, and how they can be made to do so. It is meant to teach enough and only enough library technique to enable every teacher, particularly every elementary school teacher, to be in some measure a librarian and to know how to organize such a library as she finds in her school or to get one if there is none; to be sure that its books are good ones, that they are kept in order and worn out by a proper use as soon as possible.

It has now come to be believed, and in a measure achieved, that not a teacher-librarian but a full-time trained librarian is a desideratum for every school. It seems not unlikely that such a program will shortly be accepted by school authorities and ultimately come to pass. It seems, indeed, to have been pretty generally accepted already for high schools, and there are today hundreds of full-time high school librarians where there was but one a few years ago. It is for the training of these librarians and of such teacher-librarians as still are used, that courses in library work have been organized in some normal schools and teachers colleges and are offered in many summer schools. Similar work is done in some city teacher-training classes, usually at the instance of the state department of education or the state library commission.

All this effort at first aimed only at giving teachers a little instruction in the use of the library. They were to remain teachers, not become librarians. This original aim, while still an objective in teachers colleges, is now in danger of being minimized by the purpose to train school librarians with enough pedagogy to understand and fit into the school environment, they in turn to teach the use of books to their pupils.

(b) *In elementary schools.* Instruction in the use of the library in the grades is, of course, extremely simple, often in the form of a library game, almost negligible as reference work, but yielding surprising affirmative results. The children are taught to use books only when their hands are clean, to treat them humanely, to use a dictionary, encyclopedia, index, and card catalog. With the growing number of libraries

and trained, full-time librarians in elementary schools, this instruction is growing in amount and value. That such instruction is now more or less of a necessity, due to changed methods of teaching, is generally recognized, and the value of this instruction to younger children seems proved by their actual use of reference books in assigned school work. This work in the lower schools, however, has its limitations which must be recognized in articulating it with more advanced work to be done later. In some junior high schools, for instance, definite and quite extensive courses in library instruction have been prepared for grades seven, eight, and nine.

(c) *In high schools.* In high schools this work is firmly established. It usually is attached to the English department, required of freshmen, and sometimes is carried through two or three years. Debaters are often given special instruction in reference searching and bibliography. The content of these high school courses has been worked over with care and printed in several versions.[1]

The good work of this sort that has been done in many of the best high schools for fifteen or twenty years is now increasingly noticeable in the quicker, surer use which students so trained are in turn making of college libraries, and public libraries also report that the high school and college graduate of today has lost something of an earlier fear of library mysteries and has gained distinctly in acquaintance with libraries and in facility in their serious use.

This fear of books, tenacious survival of an ancient awe for those few who could read and for the still fewer magic scrolls or volumes (the primitive books) from which were so mysteriously interpreted the meaningless little black dots and dashes—this feeling still appreciably survives. To it is added a distinct sense of helplessness in the presence of many books, especially when they are in a public institution with the inevitable atmosphere of officialism. Much instruction, publicity, effort—call it what you will—must yet be expended before the last vestiges of this old constraint shall be dissipated. And nothing promises such results in developing

[1] See bibliography at end of this chapter.

adult library users who shall be freed from this constraint, who shall substitute mastery for mystery, as the book and library instruction now given in schools. There should emerge in the next twenty years a generation which will use books in libraries as freely and much more effectively than at home, which will have learned how large numbers of books lend themselves easily to system, order and vastly increased serviceableness.

(d) *In colleges and universities.* College instruction ranges from a required hour of personal conduct to freshmen in groups of a dozen or two with an additional talk to the whole class, to one- or even two-hour elective credit courses through one semester. Beyond the first year there are occasional more intensive courses for debaters, frequent elective one-hour culture courses which combine the history of writing, printing, books, and reading with practical talks on the use of the library and sometimes an introduction to bibliography and methods of library search. Often a good drill of this sort is attached to undergraduate courses in the English or history departments. Such of these college courses as have been printed or described in detail are noted in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

Similar but more extended and thorough courses may well be given, will indeed some day be given generally to graduate students. They can be given high value both as culture courses and as training in speed and precision in using libraries. The work will naturally be in two parts—a one- or two-hour course for a half year in general and national bibliography given by the library staff to all graduate students; and courses of the same length in the bibliography of single subjects (as chemistry, Romance languages, English history) given to separate groups of the graduate students in those subjects by the members of the department or library staff best grounded in the bibliography of the various subjects.

None of this instruction to students aims at making librarians of them. Its purposes are to enable them to do their work with more speed, understanding, and success; to give them such acquaintance with library organization and prac-

tice as should be useful to all educated persons; and incidentally to furnish what is now sorely needed—a drill in system, order, and accuracy.

**3. Formal instruction in public libraries.** Here formal instruction almost reaches the vanishing point. A few libraries have initiated talks to groups of adults—foreigners, study clubs, the general public,[1] but with dubious results. Other classes or groups have occasionally requested such service and libraries have been glad to comply, but with results no more permanent or encouraging. The children's department[2] with its more fixed constituency can do and often is doing steadier and more consistent group work which it or some library agency must continue to do until that remote and happy day when a trained librarian in every school shall make it possible and better to leave all formal instruction to the schools. Publicity is easy to effect through such or similar work, but not real training. Apparently the "public" must be caught before it becomes full-fledged, while it is yet at school; and in time the public library will reap rewards in self-help directly proportioned to the extent, sound character, and content of the work done by its school and college colleagues.

But if public libraries do distinctly less of such work than do those of schools and colleges, their informal training is constant and considerable. There is much rather casual personal instruction of individuals at the card catalog, with periodical indexes, at the shelves, and with the conventional types of reference books. The *Survey of libraries in the United States*[3] gives a symposium of brief comments from a dozen or two public libraries, the gist of them being that few libraries report any definite effort to instruct adult readers in the use of the catalog or of reference books, except when such instruction is requested or when good opportunities are offered for imparting it unobtrusively.

The two exceptions at the end of the preceding paragraph

[1] Tobitt, Edith. Interesting the public. Libraries 32:117. March, 1927.
[2] Power, E. L. Library service for children. A.L.A. (In preparation)
[3] American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States A.L.A., 1926. v. 2. p. 110–11.

are significant. "To offer or not to offer" instruction is often a nice question. The librarian debating it is torn between the hope that the "prospect" may come through without it, and thus learn a useful lesson in self-help, and the fear that unless he is taken in hand he may not get from the library all he should and may be afraid to ask for help. There is, too, always the uncertainty as to whether a reader desires or will appreciate an offer of help. Some public libraries are quicker to offer aid to obvious students (as being more worth while) than to casual readers.[1] It is truly a delicate business, trying to mix self-help and library help in precisely the proportions which will send each patron away as well served as if the chief reference librarian personally had done it all.

Public libraries, too, issue fewer printed instructions, guides, and handbooks, than do school and college libraries. They are prolific with book lists, rules, directions to borrowers, bibliographies (all indispensable, fundamental information), but seldom print specific instruction in the studious use of the library. Most public library printed matter seems to be in the interest of the circulation department. The admirable, clear, simple, illustrated leaflet *How to find and procure a book,* kept constantly in print by the Boston Public Library, mentions Bates Hall (the reference room) on but three of its fourteen pages, and then only incidentally. It is indispensable, of course, in reference work, for readers to know as much as possible about how to use the catalog, but such items as the exact location of the principal subjects in the reference rooms (with floor plans perhaps), the names and locations of important indexes, the principal cyclopedias and dictionaries, an annotated list of notable special collections, or of the most used reference books, would greatly help those who are neither at all nor primarily interested in borrowing books for home use.

Special libraries serve an adult constituency, usually mainly of experts, that in many cases knows precisely what it wants or pays for, and expects to get the information served up in good form by the library. There will therefore ordinarily be

[1] This is discussed more fully in Chap. 6, p. 96 ff.

no opportunity for formal instruction in such a library, although the opportunities for personal assistance will be numerous and exacting.

When all is said, however, it is through this perpetual informal instruction that the public library does the most and best of its reference training—the best because trained and sympathetic personal service always brings with it more glow, thrill, and solid satisfaction than when rendered at arm's length or through cold print. It is the individual student in his multiform incarnations that the acolytes of the reference department do perpetually instruct—at the information desk, at the catalog, bending humbly before dictionaries, cyclopedias, indexes, poised for a moment among the branches of family trees, translating call numbers in terms of classification, explaining the nature of a bibliography and how to make one. Library "hostess" hits it off aptly though inadequately, suggesting the gracious presence, the sensitive intuition, the fine discrimination justly weighing both books and people, all of which, with thorough competence, combine to create the ideal reference worker. In such a presence it is idle to suggest, impertinent to discuss, such burning trifles as: Should the reference department have its own information desk? Are catalogers the best persons to explain the use of the catalogs? Is an annual open-house evening at the library a good plan? *Cherchez la femme*—it will nearly always be one —with the traits and the knowledge, and all such queries are swiftly answered.

**4. Printed aids to library use.** Most libraries use signs, but few use them as much as do hotels or railroad stations. A carefully worded sign inviting readers to use the staff freely, personal name signs on all or the principal desks, large clear floor plans under glass on a table, location charts in stacks and book rooms, subject signs over books in reference rooms, instruction cards prominent in the catalog trays, are suggestions for the sort of sign likely to be far more helpful and attractive than "Silence" or "Only low conversation permitted!" Clear, terse signs which will mean to the public precisely what they do to the librarian are not always easy

to make. They must be free from esoteric terms and from equivocation. In one catalog the card reading "For fuller information see main entry" sent a patron to the front door! Among a dozen or more good signs for promoting use of the *Readers' Guide,* in a recent number of the *Wilson Bulletin,* appears this typically excellent one: "I am the *Readers' Guide.* My specialty is helping you to help yourself. Try me."

Much money is spent by libraries for printing, most of it in behalf of the library as a whole or the lending departments in particular. It would seem that the reference service might well figure more heavily than it does in the printing program. Many colleges and some public libraries issue handbooks or manuals. Those from college libraries, perhaps naturally, usually give full directions for reference use while most of those from public libraries are content with scanty information and little or no real instruction.

There might well be printed for sole use of the reference department such items as:

(1) Call slips printed on one side with simple directions on the preliminary use of the catalog which brings a call slip into request;

(2) A card, folder, or flier addressed to a particular group or industry telling why and how the reference department can be of use. These are distributed in pay envelopes at factories, department stores, banks, or at dinners, meetings, etc., or enclosed in circulars sent out with reputable advertisements or sent out on mailing lists compiled by the library;

(3) A leaflet of clear directions for distribution in the reference room on compiling a subject list of books;

(4) Annotated lists, with shelf location noted, of outstanding general reference books or those on special subjects;

(5) Lists of home study courses or of vacation reading courses.

These are a few of the pieces of printing that have been found useful in different libraries. And each of these should be more than a list or an invitation; it should feature simple directions for finding the books or doing the work suggested.

Really impressive results should be got from an outside though related field—one which has been very little tilled and that little solely through the efforts of teachers or psychologists, and not librarians. Why may not every book on

study or research include a chapter or two on the use of libraries? In a recent book, L. A. Headley, *How to study in college,*[1] there is a chapter on "How to use the library." C. C. Crawford, *Technique of study,*[2] devotes pages 201 to 234 to "Using the library," and on the latter page cites ten similar chapters in other books. In Reid, E. E., *Introduction to organic research,*[3] there are four chapters—Libraries, Chemical literature, Secondary publications, and Literature searches—which illustrate splendidly the necessary dependence of research workers on libraries and the necessity for knowing how to use them with speed and precision. Such citations as these, however, are distinctly exceptional. Many such volumes make no mention of books, libraries, or any of the practical accompaniments of the study process. Why can not the American Library Association stimulate through authors and publishers the inclusion of such chapters in such books, or even have prepared a model chapter which may not only be sent out on request, but pushed in promising and appropriate directions? Publicity and instruction like that given in colleges and high schools reaches a restricted, but most promising, section of the public.

While it must be recognized that the amount and method of such training as this chapter emphasizes will inevitably differ widely among various types of libraries—may indeed be relatively little and wholly informal in public libraries—yet it is work which, certainly in the reference department, all libraries should be alert and earnest to do as much of as possible. It scarcely seems adequate to leave all of it to the high school and college libraries, though it will more and more tend to concentrate there. As education becomes more universal and specialized, as more training is required for a greater number of professions and vocations, the dependence of students on libraries will be greater and the ability to use them quickly may often be of decisive importance.

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[1] Headley, L. A. How to study in college. Holt, 1926. Reviewed in Library Journal 52:324. March 15, 1927.
[2] Crawford, C. C. Technique of study. Houghton, 1928.
[3] Reid, E. E. Introduction to organic research. Van Nostrand, 1924.

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## Thought Questions

1. Are catalogers the best persons to explain to library patrons how to use a card catalog? Why?
2. Why should (or should not) the public library seek new ways of formal instruction in the reference use of the library?
3. Should the reference department have its own information desk? Give reasons.
4. Is an open-house library birthday party a good plan? What would be the reference department's part in it?
5. Outline the "model chapter" referred to on the last page of this chapter.
6. Prepare detailed outline for a one-hour course (15 periods) on the use of the library, to be given to college freshmen.
7. Explain the statement (page 280) "Training in self-help is part of the warp and woof of any tenable theory of reference work."
8. What would you do with the reader who
   (a) Walks up and down the reference room, examining volume after volume, apparently chosen at random?
   (b) Insists that the library does not have Mark Twain's books because he has failed to find them listed in the catalog under Twain?

(c) Asks for a magazine article on Mexico which appeared two or three years ago?
(d) Asks for *Who's who* and tells you as an aside that he is writing an article about Senator Borah?

9. Draw a chart of a familiar reference room suitable for posting for the direction of readers. Indicate the location of classes of books, special book shelves, files, etc.
10. Outline a program for the instruction of the public to be followed by a small public library through one winter season. Consider both formal and informal instruction, and include work with children as well as work with adults.
11. Visit a public library and observe the signs, posters, and printed aids designed to help readers in reference work. How would you improve them? Why?

# Chapter 19

## ROOMS AND FURNITURE

1. **Comfort the first consideration**
2. **Five factors affecting comfort**
   - (a) **Quarters**
   - (b) **Quiet**
   - (c) **Heat and ventilation**
   - (d) **Floors and floor coverings**
   - (e) **Light**
3. **Furniture**

This chapter will try to describe, with respect to physical conditions only, satisfactory or near-ideal provisions for library reference work. It will stress the objects and purposes striven for in such a room or rooms and will show how these aims may be advanced or retarded by location, construction, furniture, light, heating, and ventilation.

In its present place and connection this chapter can not be a treatise on library architecture and equipment. It will consider the large matters of heat, light, and fresh air only as they affect and are important to reading and study rooms. These features are always considered by architects with regard to the whole building, yet in new buildings the needs and wishes of the reference department can often be met if it has made a clear, definite, convincing statement of them. There is no more admirable summary of these topics from the library point of view than in Bostwick, *The American public library*,[1] pages 296 to 311. They are more fully treated in Soule, *How to plan a library building for library work*,[2] and in Hadley, *Library buildings*.[3] Even in older buildings it is often possible to modify or alter lighting arrangements for

[1] Bostwick, A. E. The American public library. Ed. 3. Appleton, 1923.
[2] Soule, C. C. How to plan a library building for library work. Boston Book Co., 1912.
[3] Hadley, Chalmers. Library buildings. A.L.A., 1924.

a single room or suite and sometimes, although never so easy, to change heating and ventilating arrangements.

The present brief treatment will be from the point of view of the large or largest library, one thoroughly organized departmentally, although most that is said will be suggestive or definitely applicable in some degree to conditions under which reading and study are done in small or the smallest libraries.

**1. Comfort the first consideration.** The first thought, the highest aim in planning, locating, and furnishing rooms for reading and study is the physical comfort of the occupants. There the library staff spends seven hours daily and many patrons remove wraps and stay for an hour or two, some for a whole day. The work done is of a sort that requires for the best results quiet, good air and light, and comfortable seats. Everything must be bent to procure these things or the library has no right to invite the public nor to expect it to come. The circulation department claims patrons but a few minutes; in a sense it is a business office. But where books for reference, reading, and study on the premises, as an end or preliminary to borrowing, invite readers to long sessions, there must be, if nowhere else in the library, the utmost comfort and quiet.[1]

**2. Five factors affecting comfort.**

(a) *Quarters.* Reference work may be done in:

(1) A separate room or rooms en suite with as large a collection as possible of the most used reference aids; the conventional "R" books, vertical files, additional standard manuals, handbooks, etc.—always, of course, remembering provision for readers. In the largest libraries some of the rooms of the reference suite may house entire special collections.

(2) For research work or prolonged study, provision must be made for individual privacy. Carrels, private study rooms, individual desks with lock and key, seminary rooms often

[1] The reference librarian of a considerable public library, after reading the above paragraph in manuscript, comments thus:

"This chapter is written under the influence of many years in a 'scholarly library.' The public library can not afford to think of the reader's comfort. If it can, a 'Research' room for the few who spend many hours at the library would be sufficient."

in or adjacent to the book stacks, are now indispensable features of all university and many public library reference facilities.

(3) An alcove or part of a room with such "R" books as can be accommodated in it.

(4) A library with no separate quarters provided for reference work or books, though nearly every library segregates its conventional reference books. Even in such small libraries there is always some reference work, often a surprising amount, done by whoever is in charge at the moment.

Either in planning buildings or in adapting space, the location of the reference department should be considered with relation to:

(1) The public catalog.[1]

Theoretically this should be equally accessible to both reference and circulation departments. In practice the two departments are often adjacent, with the catalog between. When they are separated, the catalog usually is with the circulation department except in many of the larger public libraries. Frequently duplicate catalogs are made for the other departments. Certainly it is too much to expect the reference staff to work remote from the card catalog, or in large libraries from the union catalog. In college libraries the catalog is nearly always where the reference work is done, or as near the reference department as any other.

(2) The circulation department.

It is chiefly in public libraries that the location of the circulation department conditions the locating of reference work. The largest part of college library circulation is from books reserved for the various courses.

(3) The stacks.

(4) The periodical department or reading room.

Periodicals are so large and important a part of the best reference material that they, with their indexes and bound volumes, must be as near the reference room as possible. Only the largest libraries have separate periodical departments, but

[1] See American Library Association. Survey of libraries in the United States. A.L.A., 1926. v. 2. p. 81–82.

many libraries have reading rooms for current periodicals, separate from the reference room, although preferably under its care. In many libraries the last three, five, or ten years of selected periodicals are kept in the reference room. To locate the periodicals far from the reference department requires the duplication of expensive indexes.

(5) Government documents; always primary reference material.

Government documents are numbered by tens of thousands; hundreds of them are useful even to small libraries. Documents are especially bulky. They are, or should be, of considerable reference value but they are not in such constant and intensive use as some other groups of reference material, e.g., periodicals, annuals, newspapers. These considerations suggest that, save for a few items which really are reference books and which probably will form parts of the "R" collection, the stock of government documents, better than most classes of reference books, may be shelved at a distance from the reference room.

(6) Newspaper files.

These are so heavy that they must be near enough to use without being moved.

The reference staff should be nearer to all of the above than to the librarian's office, the newspaper reading room, the children's room, staff rooms, work rooms, special collections.

Above all, separate provision for reference work in its own room or rooms is most desirable. No alcove, glass partition, or waist-high fence of floor cases gives the essential privacy. The fact that this point is not always appreciated by architects or even by librarians, appears in Chalmers Hadley's useful and concentrated little book, *Library buildings*.[1] On page 129 he says, in discussing plans for a rural public library:

"The reference work done in a library of this size would scarcely call for sufficient exclusion [perhaps the writer meant *se*clusion] to demand a room separate from the adults' reading room. If the dividing wall between these two rooms were removed, the reference material would be left unchanged . . . an additional reading table

[1] Hadley, Chalmers. Library buildings. A.L.A., 1924.

could be provided and the librarian would have better supervision of the room."

The obvious comment is that if any provision is needed for reference work, it should furnish privacy and that such work requires a minimum of supervision. This need for privacy is recognized in some of the larger public libraries in the creation of reading and study rooms in special subjects, usually under careful supervision and under conditions thoroughly conducive to quiet, fruitful work, and by providing a few individual study rooms for indefinite occupancy. College libraries, even more than others, have gone to great lengths to remove serious students and faculty members from the almost inevitable hurly-burly of a crowded reading room by providing tiny yet sufficient private studies (variously called cubicles, carols, carrels) and single desks and shelf space in stack rooms. Some college libraries have a hundred or more such rooms, and plans are on foot which shortly may double this number in buildings soon to be erected. The combination of reading or circulation activities in the same room with reference or study is undesirable and occurs in buildings too small or too crowded to afford separate rooms, or in buildings housing libraries so small that separate newspaper, periodical, and reference rooms are quite out of the question. No remedy is easy or generally applicable. Certainly all libraries which are equipped to aid students and research workers, and which invite such use, should have facilities to offer them which shall be as well adapted for study as their own laboratories.

(b) *Quiet.* At best, in cities, quiet is relative and environments are not conducive to study. Street sounds pursue one relentlessly. It is hard to establish the habit and tradition of quiet in a public building. Yet, if "Quiet" as the greatest desideratum be emphasized and kept firmly in mind, much may be done, even before the building is occupied, to have ideal study conditions. The reference room can be kept off the trolley line or the busiest street; it need not be placed next to the children's room or the loan desk; it can have doors, not merely arches or passages, that shut it away from other

rooms; it can be on an upper floor if that seems quieter; it can be omitted from the formal sight-seeing itinerary; it can have echoless walls and ceilings, and no passages into other departments. These things are seldom all possible in a single library, yet in a large building they are not impossible nor even difficult to achieve if they can but have consideration when the building is being planned or remodeled. Altogether they make not alone for quiet but for that "atmosphere" which is so elusive yet so essential and salutary a part of the highest purposes of books and libraries.

The plan of Jersey City's new Greenville Branch[1] shows the utmost consideration for quiet study. The reference rooms are on the second floor, one floor removed from circulation and children's departments and from the public reading room. The only other public rooms on the second floor are exhibition rooms and there is but one entrance to the reference suite.

Another case in point is that of the forty and more branches of the New York Public Library in which the reference work is uniformly located on the third floor.

(c) *Heat and ventilation.* This is the hardest problem. An even and moderate temperature with occasional and regular fresh air is an essential condition for the best work. Yet everything is against it. There is no satisfactory combined heating and ventilating system. It might almost be said that there is no satisfactory system of either heating or ventilating. For crowded rooms no mechanical ventilation is yet more satisfying than the simple device of opening the windows, yet such is the perversity of air-tight human nature that for every person who opens a window there are at that moment three others who start to shut it. About all that can be said is to get good architects, let them do their best (they will usually find or furnish heat) and then have an armed guard detailed to open windows at regular intervals. People go to sleep reading, fail in examination, induce brain fag, headaches and worse, lose their tempers, through being kept or insisting on keeping themselves in overheated, foul air.

[1] Jersey City's Greenville Branch. Library Journal 52:358–59. April 1, 1927.

(d) *Floors and floor coverings.* The ideal floor covering should be substantial, durable, cleanly, dry, warm, noiseless, slow-burning, not slippery, and easy on the feet. Any uncovered floor, i.e., marble, tile, concrete, glass, wood, is noisy and cold. No floor covering is perfect or will last forever. Battleship linoleum and cork carpet are the most satisfactory materials. They must be carefully waxed and cleaned, and in practice the seams soon make trouble. This latter and most annoying difficulty can be overcome by using cork tiling which, if well laid, will stay smoother, and last as long as or longer than linoleum. Interlocking rubber tiling has been liked where used but it is more expensive than linoleum or cork and less consistent in quality than either. To the reference librarian "noiseless" seems almost the chief desideratum. Any librarian condemned to live with marble, stone, concrete, wood, or tile floors which, besides being noisy, are hard on the feet, is justified in strongly recommending, or in certain rooms even insisting, that rubber heels be worn by the staff even at library expense.

(e) *Light.* The best light, of course, is daylight, sunlight —the cheapest, the cheeriest, the healthiest for either men or books. This should be conserved, encouraged, utilized whenever possible—by more and larger windows; by finishing walls in reflecting, not absorbing, tints; by top floor reading rooms in city buildings; by having plenty of yard about the building; by putting reading rooms where natural light is least likely ever to be cut off. The growing smokiness and dirtiness of cities has put natural light increasingly at a premium. It is sometimes almost imperative to choose between readers and books. Books in the reading rooms can have natural light without depriving readers, but if a large book-stack can not have natural light without penalizing readers, then the latter should unquestionably have first choice. It is much better to locate a large stack as a central core, artificially lighted, and use the space on all sides for naturally lighted reading or work rooms.

Artificial light may be *indirect,* when all lamps are hid and all light is that reflected from ceiling or walls; *semi-indirect*

from enclosed but visible lamps, with the light thus modified thrown against a white reflector set directly over the lamps; *direct* when the light from a bare lamp, softened only by a possible shade, falls directly on book or table. Of these, indirect lighting, however sufficient and successful in lecture halls, theatres, and railway stations, is not the best for reading rooms. Direct lighting is effective but unless located to come over the left shoulder of each reader, carefully shaded and of proper and uniform candle power (depending upon distance of lamp from eye) it is either too strong or bad for the eyes. Semi-indirect, where half the light comes direct but from enclosed lamps and half is reflected upward from bare lamps, seems to meet reading requirements best. Such fixtures should be suspended from chains to be lowered, if necessary, more effectively to light tables or shelves beneath. There are, of course, serious objections to having light fixtures within reach in school and college libraries, but they have no relation to the merits of direct versus indirect lighting.

3. **Furniture.** The utmost that seems called for under this head in the present connection is little more than a list of the chief articles of furniture (as distinguished from supplies) which are generally found in the reference room. Here, again, privacy and quiet may be promoted by the proper kinds and arrangement of furniture.

(a) *Tables.* The present tendency is toward small tables for not more than six readers in public reading rooms. Indeed, some libraries provide individual desks with bookshelves, thus offering in the midst of the reference collection better privileges and almost as much privacy as in carrels or at single stack-room desks. Individual desks are wasteful of space, but on every other count are to be preferred.

It must be noted that tables in colleges and school libraries should be as plain and simple as possible and without light fixtures either on the table or within reach. There should be no cleats or unintentioned shelves underneath where books may be hid, nor should there be drawers. In reference libraries, especially in private study rooms, desk drawers with lock and key are very desirable.

(b) *Chairs.* No kind of furniture affects comfort and silence so much as chairs. They should be of simple design, comfortable, some with arms, and all legs should be furnished with metal or glass glides or disks. They should be firm and solid enough, especially in school and college reading rooms, so that they can not easily be upset.

(c) *Shelves.* The typical wall shelving of standard dimensions may well be freely modified for the special needs of reading and reference rooms. Its usual plain, not to say austere, lines may be allowed to soften and unfold in decorative cornice and molding; a roomy, old-fashioned ledge is in order at the precise height which makes for the easiest consultation of books. If space prevents this, an acceptable alternative is a broad, pull-out, sliding shelf. All kinds of special stands, roller shelves, cases and racks especially designed for newspapers, magazines, atlases, dictionaries, and indexes save both wear and tear on expensive books and strength of assistants. The best case for any clumsy or heavy book or set is the one which involves the least moving of the book in order to use it. It should not often be necessary to take a much-used, heavy reference book *from* and return it *to* a certain place. Such books are better kept flat on tables or waist-high stands ready to open to the desired page. The most puzzling reference material to store and use satisfactorily is maps. Practically all of a considerable library literature[1] on "maps and atlases" has to do with their storage, care, availability, and treatment in organizing them for use. In large reference rooms some of these special pieces of furniture can be "built in" when the building is constructed. This saves room and insures uniformity of style and finish.

(d) *Vertical files.* The vertical file is generally accepted as the standard container for minor, or ephemeral, or unbound library materials—pamphlets, book-plates, clippings, pictures, indexed correspondence, maps, club programs—to name but a few items which are staple and numerous in the reference department. Its many reference uses are best de-

[1] Cannons, H. G. T. Bibliography of library economy. A.L.A., 1927. p. 527–28. American Library Association. Pamphlets and minor library material. (Manual of library economy no. 25) A.L.A., 1917. p. 28–29.

scribed by Mabel E. Colegrove in *Library Journal* 44:295,[1] and in *The vertical file,*[2] a number in the "Modern American Library Economy Series."

Vertical files are either wood or metal. The former is better, cheaper, and less noisy. Wooden files can readily be built into a reading room. There can never be too many of them. Their convenience in organizing all sorts of reference material is described in Chapter 4.[3]

(e) *The reference desk.* There is almost always a reference assistant stationed in every reading or study room and this despite the inevitable accompanying conversation, telephoning, and interviewing. In a few cases the desk is recessed from one side of the room or is in an alcove secluded by bookcases (thus hindering supervision of the room), or better still, glass-enclosed, but in the main the reference desk is in the midst of things, and so, frequently, is the card catalog with its attendant noise and bustle. The catalog should, if possible, be placed quite outside the reading room, although this is likely to make more travel for the staff, but beyond this it is difficult, perhaps unthinkable, to go. A glass cage in the reading room is not a bad solution if an open reference desk seems too noisy, yet even this produces a sense of remoteness and a disinclination to disturb the occupant which is quite contrary to the ease and friendliness with which the library wishes to meet its friends.

In many small libraries the reference room or alcove is unattended save during the few busiest hours. When personal service is required, it is rendered by any staff member on duty.

There would seem, however, to be no argument, which library executives would admit to be valid, for leaving such rooms in large libraries wholly unattended. The only reasonable compromise would be to place the principal desk and librarian, with most of the special files and apparatus, just

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[1] Colegrove, M. E. Material of current value—its collection and care. Library Journal 44:295–98. May, 1919.

[2] McVety, M. A., and Colegrove, M. E. The vertical file. (Modern American library economy) Wilson, 1915.

[3] See page 72 ff.

outside the door, having a sub-attendant in the room proper.

(f) *Minor furniture.* A sixteen-inch globe, signs for days open and closed (printed ones are neater than the home-made), closets for "disappearing" books, a non-striking clock, cork-covered bulletin boards, foot-stools, hassocks, felt seats for staff comfort, thermometer and thermostat, electric time stamps, are some of the more important minor items of furniture for reading rooms. Exhibit cases, not in reading rooms but in adjacent corridors or separate exhibit rooms, are frequently kept filled by the reference department.

The reference department should have ready access to a photostat (for the present this applies to the largest libraries only), the uses of which are more particularly described in Chapter 5.[1]

Facilities for typing, copying, and duplicating, other than the photostat, should be available inside the library, the terms on which such work is done to be fixed by the library.

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Pages 296-311 refer especially to rooms and equipment.

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## Thought Questions

1. Visit a neighboring library and observe the physical equipment of the reference rooms. What effect does this seem to have on the quality or scope of service?
2. If possible, observe similar conditions in another library and draw a comparison.

[1] See page 87 ff.

3. Consult several trade catalogs of library furniture, and select models of tables, chairs, files, and desks, which seem particularly well suited to reference work.
4. From the same catalogs choose models of minor library furniture which would add to the efficiency of reference service.
5. What advantages do you see in individual tables or desks for reference service? What disadvantages?
6. Where would you locate the reference librarian's desk in a library having only one reference room? Why?
7. In planning a reference room, what provision would you make for work to be done without interruption? For necessary conferences?
8. Sketch roughly the plan of a one-room reference department. Show location of reference desk, files, etc., and indicate location of the circulation department, public catalog, stack, etc.
9. What parts of a reference, reading, and study room are most important to have well lighted? In what parts can artificial light be dispensed with?
10. In section one (page 294) two opinions appear; support your own view with reasons.

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